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ΑΚΡΟΓΩΝΙ
ΟΥ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ.

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58.52

Practical Discourses

ON

REGENERATION.

IN TEN SERMONS.

ON THE FOLLOWING SUBJECTS:

I. The Character of the Unregenerate.
II. III. The Nature of Regeneration.
IV. V. VI. The Neceſſity and Importance of it.
VII. The Divine Influences neceſſary to produce it.
VIII. The various Methods in which thoſe Influences operate.
IX. Directions to awakened Sinners.
X. An Addreſs to the Regenerate.

BY P. DODDRIDGE, D.D.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

TWO SERMONS,

ON THE SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH.

THE THIRD AMERICAN EDITION.

BOSTON:

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MAY, 1803.

PREFACE.

IT is undoubtedly the duty of every wise and good man to be forming schemes for the service of God and his fellow-creatures in future years, if he be continued to them; and it will be his prudence to do it early in life, that he may be gradually preparing to execute them in the most advantageous manner he can. But while a *man's heart* is thus *devising his way, the Lord directeth his steps.* And as many such schemes will probably be left unfinished at death, which will quickly come to break off our purposes and the thoughts of our hearts; so it is not improbable that they who humbly and obediently follow the leadings of Divine Providence and grace, may often find themselves called out on a sudden to services which, but a little before, were quite unthought of by them.

This has been the case with me in most of the Sermons I have published, of which very few were composed with any view to the press; and it is most remarkably so with respect to these on Regeneration. Besides many other excellent persons, my much honoured friend, Dr. Wright, has handled the subject in so judicious and lively a manner, and through the great goodness of God to us, so many thousands of his treatise upon it are dispersed in all parts of our land, that I could hardly have believed any one who had told me I should thus have resumed it; nor had I the least intention of doing it, when I began that course of Lectures which I now offer to my reader's perusal.

I did indeed think it neceſſary laſt year to treat the ſubject more largely than I had ever done before, knowing in the general how important it is, and obſerving that ſeveral controverſies had about that time been raiſed concerning it, which (though I do not judge it neceſſary to mention the particulars of them) I was ready to fear, might have had an ill influence to unſettle men's minds, and either to lead them into ſome particular errors, or into a general apprehenſion that it was a mere point of ſpeculation, about which it was not neceſſary to form any judgment at all.*

That theſe diſcourſes might be more generally uſeful, I determined to preach them on Lord's-day evenings, that thoſe of my neighbours who were not my ſtated hearers might, if they thought proper, have an opportunity of attending them: and accordingly they were attended to the laſt with uncommon diligence; a great many ſuch perſons, of different perſuaſions and communions, making up a part of the auditory. As practical inſtruction and improvement was the main thing I had in view, I knew it was neceſſary to make my diſcourſes as plain, as free, and as ſerious as I could. But before I had finiſhed near half of my ſcheme, ſeveral of my hearers earneſtly requeſted that the ſermons might be publiſhed; and the requeſt grew more extenſive and importunate every week, with this additional circumſtance, (which I much regarded) that ſome very pious and judicious friends at a diſtance, being providentially brought to the hearing of ſome of theſe lectures, ſtrongly concurred in the deſire; expreſſing a very cheerful hope, that the

* See Mr. Hebden's Appendix to his late Diſcourſe on REGENERATION.

reading of what they had heard might be useful in distant parts of the land, to which they assured me they would endeavour to spread them as opportunity might offer. As the advice of several of my brethren in the ministry was joined with all this, I thought myself bound in duty at length to comply; which I was the rather encouraged to do from the several instances in which I had reason to believe the divine blessing had in some measure attended these sermons from the pulpit, and had made them the means of producing and advancing the change they described and enforced.

On these considerations, as soon as I returned from that long journey on which I set out the day after these lectures were concluded, I applied myself to recollect the substance of them as well as I could, from the short hints I had written of them, with the assistance of those notes which some of my friends had taken after me in characters. Some things are, perhaps, omitted, though I believe but very few; some contracted, and some enlarged; but my hearers will find them in the main what they heard. It cost me more labour than I was aware, from such materials, to reduce them into their present form; and I hope the multitude of my other business will be allowed as an apology, if I proceeded in them slower than some might expect.

I shall leave it to my reader to observe for himself the manner and method in which I have handled my subject, without giving him a particular view of it here; only must beg leave to tell him in the general, that I hope he will find I have not presumed so far

on the ſublimity of my ſubject, as to talk without determinate ideas; for which reaſon I have omitted many phraſes, uſed particularly of late by ſome pious and worthy perſons, becauſe I freely own, that as I cannot find them in my Bible, ſo neither can I underſtand their exact meaning; and it ſeems very improper to embarraſs ſuch plain Diſcourſes as theſe with a language, which, not being thoroughly maſter of, I may chance to miſapply, ſuppoſing thoſe phraſes to be really more proper than I can at preſent apprehend they are. I have endeavoured to keep to one idea of REGENERATION, which I take to be that which the Scripture ſuggeſts: by REGENERATION I mean "a prevailing diſpoſition of the ſoul to univerſal holineſs, produced and cheriſhed by the influences of GOD's Spirit on our hearts, operating in a manner ſuitable to the conſtitution of our nature, as rational and accountable creatures." If this be (as I think I have proved at large that it is) the Scriptural notion of it, it will follow, that nothing which may be found where this is not, or which may not be found where this is, can be REGENERATION in the Scripture ſenſe; which is that ſenſe in which we are much more concerned, than we are in that to which any human writers, whether ancient or modern, may think proper to apply it.

If the doctrine which I have endeavoured in the whole courſe of theſe Sermons to confirm and illuſtrate by the word of God, be in one form or another generally taught by my brethren in the miniſtry, of whatever denomination, I rejoice in it for their own ſakes, as well as for that of the people under their care. I am very little inclined to contend about tech-

nical phrases of human invention, which have with equal frailty been idolized by some, and anathematized by others. We shall, I hope, learn more and more *to bear one another's burthens*, and to study the kindest interpretations which the words of each other will admit. But I must take the liberty to say, I am in my conscience persuaded that this view of things, which is here proposed, though perhaps not very fashionable, is in the general so edifying, and so naturally leads to the frequent review of many other important doctrines of Christianity, which are closely connected with it, that I am well satisfied it will be our wisdom to adhere to it, and to make it very familiar to our own minds, and to those of our hearers. Nor can I imagine that any variety in the idioms of different languages, or the customs of different ages and nations, can be a sufficient reason for bringing Scripture phrases into disuse, while we keep to the original ideas signified by them. There seems to be a peculiar felicity in them to express Divine truth; and they will undoubtedly be found the safest vehicle of religious knowledge, and the surest band of union among Christians; while, however we may differ in other matters, we so generally agree in acknowledging that our Bibles contain the oracles of our God.

Let us, therefore, who under different denominations are honoured with the ministry of the everlasting Gospel, agree, for a while at least, to suspend our debates upon less necessary subjects, that we may, with united efforts, concur in prosecuting that great design for which the Gospel was revealed, the Spirit given, and our office instituted. And since it is so evident that irreligion has grown upon us, while we have been attending to other, and to be sure smaller mat-

ters, let us by a plain, ſerious, and zealous way of preaching the moſt vital truths of Chriſtianity, joined with a diligent inſpection of the ſouls committed to our care, try what can be done towards preventing the progreſs of this growing apoſtacy, and recovering the ground we have already loſt. Ignorant and prejudiced people may perhaps accuſe us of bigotry or enthuſiaſm; but let us do our beſt to convince them of their error by the candour of our temper, and the prudence of our conduct; and remember that as Chryſoſtom excellently ſpeaks in theſe lively words, "It is a ſufficient conſolation for our labours, and far more than an equivalent for all, if we may have a teſtimony in our conſciences, that we compoſe and regulate our diſcourſes in ſuch a manner as may be approved by God, in whoſe name we ſpeak."

Northampton,
Nov. 7, 1741.

POSTSCRIPT.

TO what I have ſaid in the concluſion of the firſt Sermon concerning the proper import of the word REGENERATION, I beg leave to add the following remarks, for the farther ſatisfaction of ſome worthy perſons, who think it may be convenient to ſtate the matter a little more particularly.

I acknowledge that many learned and pious divines have taught and contended, that REGENERATION does, in the ſtricteſt propriety of ſpeech, ſignify BAPTISM. So that no unbaptized perſon, how well diſpoſed ſoever, can properly be ſaid to be regenerated; whereas that title may juſtly be given to all who have been baptized, how deſtitute ſoever they might have been of Chriſtian faith and holineſs when they received the ordinance, or how groſsly ſoever they may ſince have forfeited the final bleſſings of a regenerate ſtate. Dr. Waterland has ſtated this matter at large in his laboured and ingenious treatiſe on the ſubject, which is the beſt I know on this ſide of the queſtion. And though this would be a very improper place to enter on a critical examination of that piece, I will briefly touch on the chief arguments which he, or others in his ſentiments, have urged in vindication of this favourite notion. So far as I can recollect, what they ſay is capable of being reduced to two heads;—that *Chriſtian antiquity* uſes the word in this ſenſe;—and that there are paſſages of *Scripture* which authorize ſuch an application of it.

As to the firſt of theſe, I readily own that the word has this ſenſe in the generality of the Chriſtian writers, from about the middle of the ſecond century, though I think not ſo univerſally as ſome have concluded:* but I

* *Clemens Alexandrinus*, ſo often, and to be ſure reaſonably, quoted on the other ſide, plainly uſes the word for *a change of character by true repentance; (Strom. lib.* ii. *page* 425) where, ſpeaking of *a penitent harlot*, he ſays, "that being born again by converſion, or a change in her temper and behaviour, ſhe has the regeneration of life."

think it eaſy to account for ſuch a uſe of it among them. For in the earlieſt ages of the church, perſons were generally baptized as ſoon as they were converted to the cordial belief of Chriſtianity; and therefore the time of their converſion, and that of their baptiſm, might naturally enough be ſpoken of as one: and as this was a period when they did, as it were, come into a new world, it is no wonder that the action by which they teſtified a change ſo lately made, ſhould be put for that change itſelf, juſt as illumination alſo among the ancients ſignifies baptiſm: not to intimate that the grand illumination of the mind was made by this rite, or at the time of it; for that would be ſuppoſing the perſon in darkneſs when he embraced the Goſpel, and determined to be baptized: but becauſe it was taken for granted, and that very juſtly in thoſe days, that every one ſavingly enlightened would ſoon be baptized, that ſo he might be regularly joined to the ſociety of enlightened or regenerated perſons, that is, to the Chriſtian church: which no doubt had the beſt right of any body of men in the world to that title, though in its pureſt ſtate it contained ſome ignorant and wicked members. In a word, a man by baptiſm ſolemnly profeſſed himſelf a Chriſtian; and as it was generally the firſt overt act by which his believing the Goſpel could be publicly and generally known, and was alſo ſuppoſed to be very near the time of his inward converſion, they dated his regeneration, that is, his happy change (as that word uſed to ſignify even among the heathen*) from that time. We own therefore that theſe ancient Chriſtians (of whom I always think and ſpeak

* It is well known that Cicero expreſſes the happy change made in his ſtate, when reſtored from his baniſhment, by this word: (*Cic. ad Attic. lib.* vi. *Epiſt.* 6.) The Greeks expreſſed by it the doctrine of the Brachmans, in which they affirmed our entering on a new ſtate of being after death. (*Clem. Alex. Strom. lib.* iii. *page* 452.) And the Stoicks uſed it to denote their expected renovation of the world after ſucceſſive conflagrations. *Marc. Antonin. Medit. lib.* xi. §. 1. v. 13. x. 7. (See *Lucian. Oper. pag.* 532. *Euſeb. Præp. Evang. ex numen. lib.* xv. *chap.* 19. *Philſ. Jud. de Mundi Immort. pag.* 940. 951. and in many other places.) And ſo the fathers often uſed to ſignify the reſurrection which Chriſtians expect. See *Euſeb. Eccl. Hiſt. lib.* v. *chap.* 1. *in fin.* Compare *Matt.* xix. 28. and the *Note* there *Fam. Expoſ. Vol.* II *pag.* 238.

with great reſpect) had a very good excuſe for this method of ſpeaking: but whether they were perfectly accurate in this, and whether they did not recede from the Scripture uſe of the word, may be matter of farther inquiry.

As to the arguments from *Scripture* in ſupport of the interpretation I oppoſe, they are taken partly from particular places; but chiefly, as I apprehend, from the general tenor of it, in which Chriſtians are ſpoken of as regenerated.

The particular texts are *John* iii. 5. and *Tit.* iii. 5. on which much of the ſtreſs of this controverſy is laid; but on conſidering them attentively, I find nothing in either of them to lead us to think baptiſm the regeneration ſpoken of there.

As to the former of them, *John* iii. 5. when our Lord ſays, *Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God;* it is (after all the contempt with which that interpretation has been treated) very poſſible he may mean, by a well-known figure, to expreſs one idea by both thoſe clauſes, that is, the purifying influences of the Spirit cleanſing the mind, as water does the body: as elſewhere, to be *baptized with the Holy Ghoſt and with fire (Matt.* iii. 11.) ſignifies to be baptized by the Spirit operating like fire. But if there is indeed a reference to baptiſm in theſe words (which I own I am much inclined to believe) it will by no means follow that baptiſm is REGENERATION. On that ſuppoſition, I ſtill think the ſenſe of the paſſage muſt be that which I have given in my paraphraſe on it *(Fam. Expoſ. vol.* I. *pag.* 148.) "Whoſoever would become a regular member of the kingdom of GOD, muſt not only be baptized, but as ever he deſires to ſhare in its ſpiritual and eternal bleſſings, muſt experience the renewing and ſanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit on his ſoul, to cleanſe it from the power of corruption, and to animate and quicken it to a ſpiritual and divine life." It is granted therefore, that how excellent ſoever any man's character is, he muſt be baptized before he can be looked upon as completely a member of the church of Chriſt; and that, in general, *being born of the Spirit*, he will alſo be ſolicitous that he may *be born of water*, and

ſo *fulfil all righteouſneſs*. But it will never follow from hence, that *being born of water* and *born of the Spirit* are the ſame thing. The text rather implies they are different; and I think every body muſt own, they may be actually ſeparate. Nothing therefore can be more abſurd than to infer from this text, that if there be two perſons, one of which is *born of the Spirit*, and *not of water*; another *of water*, and *not of the Spirit*; the latter, that is, the wicked man, who has perhaps with ſome iniquitous deſign been baptized, may properly be ſaid to be regenerated, or born of GOD, and conſequently to be *an heir of GOD*, (*Rom.* viii. 17.) rather than a truly religious man, who has not yet been baptized, either through want of opportunity, or through ſome unhappy miſtake, as to the nature and deſign, or the perpetuity and obligations of that ordinance. Now this I take to be preciſely the queſtion, and muſt declare that when a baptized perſon is deſtitute of true religion, that birth which he had by water, ſeems to me as it were an evaneſcent thing, or a thing which diſappears as unworthy the mention; and that it muſt be therefore moſt ſafe and adviſeable, as well as moſt agreeable to the Scripture ſenſe, to appropriate the title of regenerate perſons to thoſe ſanctified by Divine grace, rather than to uſe it of all who are baptized.

As to the text in Titus (chap. iii. 5.) where God is ſaid to *ſave us by the waſhing of regeneration*, or, as ſome earneſtly contend it ſhould be rendered, *by the laver of regeneration*: I might anſwer, that as that interpretation is by no means neceſſary,* it cannot be proved that baptiſm is here deſigned, though I acknowledge there may be a graceful alluſion to it: the Apoſtle may mean, we are ſaved *by God's waſhing our hearts by his* ſanctifying *Spirit* (a phraſe ſo often uſed in the Old Teſtament) and

* The original is διὰ λυτρου παλιγγενεσιας. Now it is certain, the ſeventy uſe another word, that is, Λυτηρ, to ſignify Laver, Exod. xxx. 18. 28. xxxi. 9; and I think (ſo far as I have obſerved) every where elſe: and Λυτρον (St. Paul's word here) is uſed where it cannot ſignify laver, for *the water in which ſheep are waſhed*, Cant. iv. 2. and for *a large quantity of water* in which an adult perſon was *waſhed or bathed*. Eph. v. 26. And this remark quite overthrows all the argument from this text, if any argument would follow from rendering it *laver*: but I think I need not urge this.

thereby *making us his children:* and in this ſenſe it might have been uſed, though baptiſm had never been inſtituted. But granting (as I have done in the beginning of the ſeventh Sermon, pag. 138.) that Λυτρον may be rendered laver, and that baptiſm may be the laver referred to; and that "there is indeed an alluſion to the waſhing new-born children;" (as Mr. Mede in his diatribe on this text contends;) I think this text will be ſo far from proving that St. Paul meant to call baptiſm REGENERATION, that it will prove the contrary: for regeneration itſelf, and the laver of regeneration, cannot be the ſame thing; and whatever Tertullian and other ancients may fancifully talk of our being generated like fiſhes in the water, in a weak alluſion to the technical word ιχθυς, common ſenſe will ſee how abſurd it would be to apply this to a child, and will teach us rather to argue, that as children muſt be born before they can be waſhed, ſo they muſt be regenerated before the waſhing of regeneration (that is, the waſhing which belongs to their new birth) can be applied to them. But on the whole, as waſhing an infant refers to its pollution, and no pollution attends our regeneration as ſuch, I am more and more inclined to think there is no reference at all here to a laver, or to the waſhing new-born children; and therefore, that this waſhing and the renewing of the Holy Ghoſt are exegetical, and that the latter clauſe might be rendered, *even the renewing, &c.* which makes the text deciſive for the ſenſe in which I uſe the word.

After all then, if any argument can be deduced from Scripture in favour of the manner of ſpeaking now in debate, it muſt be from the general tenor of it; according to which it ſeems that all who are members of the viſible church are ſpoken of as regenerate; from which it may be inferred, with ſome plauſible probability at leaſt, that baptiſm, by which they are admitted into that ſociety, may be called REGENERATION: and I am ready to believe, as I hinted above, that this was the chief reaſon why the ancients ſo often uſed the word in the ſenſe I am now oppoſing.

Now with relation to this, I deſire it may be recol-

lected, that when Chriſtianity firſt appeared in the world, it was attended with ſuch diſcouragements, as made the very profeſſion of it, in a great meaſure, a teſt of men's characters. The Apoſtles, therefore, knowing the number of hypocrites to be comparatively very ſmall, generally take no notice of them, but addreſs themſelves to whole bodies of Chriſtians, as if they were truly what they profeſſed to be. Juſt as our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, though he knew the wickedneſs of Judas, often addreſſes himſelf to the whole body of his Apoſtles, as if they were all his faithful ſervants, and makes gracious declarations and promiſes to the whole ſociety, which could by no means be applicable to this one corrupt and wretched member of it; telling them, for inſtance, that *they ſhould* ſhare in his final triumph, and *ſit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Iſrael.* Mat. xix. 28.

This is therefore the true key to all thoſe paſſages in which Chriſtians are, *in the general*, ſaid to be *adopted, ſanctified, juſtified, &c.* as well as *regenerated.* The Apoſtles had reaſon, in the judgment of charity, to think thus of by far the greateſt part of them; and therefore they ſpeak to them all, as in ſuch a happy ſtate. And agreeably to this, we find not only ſuch privileges, but alſo ſuch characters, aſcribed to Chriſtians in general, as were only applicable to ſuch of them as were Chriſtians indeed. Thus all the Corinthians are ſpoken of by the Apoſtle Paul, as *waiting for the coming of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, (1 Cor. i. 7.) and all the Epheſians, and all the Coloſſians, as having *faith in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and love to all the ſaints*, (Eph. i. 15. Col. i. 4.) and all the Philippians, as having a *good work begun in them*, which Paul was perſuaded *God would perfect*, (Phil. i. 6.) and all the Theſſalonians, as remarkable for *their work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope*, (1 Theſſ. i. 3.) though it evidently appears there were perſons in ſeveral of theſe churches who behaved much amiſs, and to whom, had he been particularly addreſſing to each of them alone, he could not by any means have uſed ſuch language. On the like principles Peter, when addreſſing to all the Chriſtians in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Aſia, and Bithynia, ſpeaks of the whole aggregate of them (1 Pet. 8.) as *loving an unſeen Saviour*, and amidſt

all their tribulations, *rejoicing in him with joy unſpeakable and full of glory*; though probably there were ſome weak and dejected Chriſtians among them, and undoubtedly in ſo large an extent of country, in which there were ſuch a vaſt number of churches, not a few, who (as our Lord afterwards expreſſes it of ſome of them) *had only a name to live, while they were dead*, Rev. iii. 1. in which paſſage by the way, our Lord uſes the ſame figure, and deſcribes the whole body by the character of thoſe who made the greater part of it.

I ſtate the matter thus particularly, becauſe I think this obvious remark is a ſufficient anſwer to what is moſt peculiar and important in a late Diſcourſe, conſiſting of near 130 quarto pages, and entitled, *A Key to the Apoſtolic Writings, &c.* prefixed by the Rev. Mr. Taylor of Norwich to his late Paraphraſe and Notes on the Romans. I think what I have briefly advanced here will much more effectually anſwer the end of fixing the true ſenſe of the Scripture phraſes in queſtion. And I cannot forbear ſaying, that to determine the ſenſe of the words *called, redeemed, ſanctified, &c.* when applied to the Chriſtian church, by that in which they are uſed in Moſes and the prophets with reſpect to the whole people of Iſrael, ſeems to me as unreaſonable, as it would be to maintain, that the dimenſions, the ſtrength, and the beauty of a body, are to be moſt exactly eſtimated by looking on its ſhadow.

Yet on this evidently weak and miſtaken principle, the learned and ingenious Author referred to above, ventures not only to attempt an entire alteration in the generally received ſtrain of theological Diſcourſes, but to throw out a cenſure, which, conſidering its extent and its ſeverity, muſt either be very terrible, or very pitiable. He not only ſeems to think, if I underſtand him right, that we were *all regenerated* (if at all) as well as *juſtified*, in thoſe of *our parents* who were firſt converted from idolatry to Chriſtianity (Key, §. 81, 82. and 246.) as indeed he expreſsly ſays, "that we are *born* in a *juſtified*," and therefore, undoubtedly (if the word is to be retained) in a regenerate "ſtate;" but he preſumes to ſay, that ſuch doctrines as have been almoſt univerſally taught and received among Chriſtians, concerning "*Juſtification, regeneration, redemption, &c.*

have quite taken away the very ground of the Chriſtian life, the *grace* of GOD, and have left no object for the faith of a ſinner to work upon." (§. 357.) And hereupon, leſt it ſhould be forgot, he repeats it in the ſame ſection, that to repreſent it as "the ſubject of doubtful inquiry, trial, and examination, whether we have *an intereſt in Chriſt*, whether we are *in a ſtate of pardon*, whether we be *adopted*" (and by conſequence, to be ſure, whether we be *regenerated*) "is" (as the *Antinomians* I imagine would alſo ſay) "to make *our juſtification*, as it inveſts us in thoſe bleſſings, to be of works, and not by faith alone;" and (as was juſt before ſaid in the ſame words) "to take away the very ground of the Chriſtian life, the *grace* of GOD, and to leave no object for the faith of a ſinner to act upon." And this way of ſtating things, which has ſo generally prevailed, is joined with the wickedneſs and contentions of profeſſing Chriſtians, as a third cauſe of that diſregard to the Goſpel which is ſo common in the preſent day.

Now as no book can fall more directly under this cenſure, than this of mine, in which it is the buſineſs of the three firſt Sermons to direct profeſſing Chriſtians in an inquiry, whether they be or be not in a regenerate ſtate; I thought it not improper, in this Poſtſcript, briefly to acquaint my reader with the principles on which I continue to think the view, in which I have put the matter, to be rational and ſcriptural,* and do ſtill in my con-

* For the full proof of this, that it is *the moſt ſcriptural ſenſe*, I muſt deſire the reader diligently to examine, and ſeriouſly to conſider, the ſeveral texts which are quoted in the following Diſcourſes; for it would ſwell this Poſtſcript too much to enumerate them all here, and to give them a critical examination. Let it ſtill be remembered, that to be *regenerated*, and to be *born of God*, are equivalent phraſes: And with this remark, let any one that can do it paraphraſe all the paſſages referred to, in two different views; firſt putting the word *baptiſm* for *regeneration*, and *baptized perſons* for *born of God*; and then ſubſtituting our definition of regeneration or of a regenerate perſon, inſtead of the words themſelves: and I cannot but think he will be ſtruck with that demonſtration, which will (as it were) emerge of itſelf upon ſuch a trial. And I muſt add, that if he looks into the context of many of theſe paſſages, he will at the ſame time ſee how utterly ungrounded it is to aſſert, as ſome have done, "that regeneration is only uſed when applied to Jewiſh converts to Chriſtianity, referring to their

ſcience judge it far preferable to what the advocates of baptiſmal regeneration on the one hand, or Mr. Taylor on the other, would introduce. It ſeems to me, that the points in diſpute with him are much more important than our debates with them, as a much greater number of Scriptures are concerned, and the whole tenor of our miniſterial addreſſes would be much more ſenſibly affected. Had I leiſure to diſcuſs the matter more largely with this gentleman, I ſhould think it might be an important ſervice to the Goſpel of Chriſt. I hope it will be undertaken by ſome abler hand; and ſhall, in the mean time, go on preaching and writing in the manner ſo ſolemnly condemned, with no apprehenſion from the diſcharge of all this overloaded artillery, except it be what I feel for the zealous engineer himſelf, and a few other friends who may chance to ſtand nearer him than in prudence they ought.

former birth from Abraham;" a notion ſo fully confuted by our Lord's Diſcourſe with Nicodemus, John iii. 3. & ſeq. by Tit. iii. 5. and by 1 Pet. i. 3, 23. ii. 2. when compared with 1 Pet. i. 14. iv. 3. (which proves that the Apoſtle there wrote to ſocieties, of which the greater part had before been idolatrous Gentiles) that I think it quite ſuperfluous to diſcuſs it more largely here.

Northampton,
June 13, 1745.

CONTENTS.

DISCOURSES ON REGENERATION.

SERMON I.

Of the CHARACTER of the UNREGENERATE.

EPHES. ii. 1, 2.

And you hath he quickened, *who were dead in treſpaſſes and ſins, wherein in time paſt ye walked according to the courſe of this world, according to the Prince of the power of the air, the Spirit that now worketh in the children of diſobedience.* Page 21

SERMON II.

Of the NATURE of REGENERATION, and particularly of the CHANGE it produces in Men's Apprehenſions.

2 COR. v. 17.

If any man be in Chriſt, he is *a new creature: old things are paſſed away, behold, all things are become new.* 39

SERMON III.

Of the NATURE of REGENERATION, with reſpect to the CHANGE it produces in Men's Affections, Reſolutions, Labours, Enjoyments, and Hopes.

From the ſame Text. 56

SERMON IV.

The NECESSITY of REGENERATION argued from the immutable Conſtitution of GOD.

JOHN iii. 3.

Jeſus anſwered and ſaid unto him, Verily, verily, I ſay unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot ſee the kingdom of GOD. 77.

SERMON V.

Of the INCAPACITY of an UNREGENERATE Perſon for reliſhing the Enjoyments of the Heavenly World.

From the ſame Text. 99

SERMON VI.

Of the IMPORTANCE of entering into the Kingdom of Heaven.

From the ſame Text. 118

SERMON VII.

Of the Neceſſity of DIVINE INFLUENCES to produce REGENERATION in the Soul.

TITUS iii. 5, 6.

Not by works of righteouſneſs which we have done, but according to his mercy he ſaved us, by the waſhing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghoſt, which he ſhed on us abundantly through Jeſus Chriſt our Saviour. 137

SERMON VIII.

Of the VARIOUS METHODS of the DIVINE OPERATION in the production of this Saving Change.

1 COR. xii. 6.

——*There are diverſities of operations, but it is the ſame GOD which worketh all in all.* 158

SERMON IX.

DIRECTIONS to awakened SINNERS.

ACTS ix. 6.

And he, trembling and aſtoniſhed, ſaid, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? 184

SERMON X.

An ADDRESS to the REGENERATE, founded on the preceding Diſcourſes.

JAMES i. 18.

Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we ſhould be a kind of firſt-fruits of his creatures. 200

The Scripture Doctrine of Salvation by Grace through Faith.

SERMON I.

EPHES. ii. 8.

For by grace are ye ſaved through faith; and that not of yourſelves; it is the gift of GOD.

SERMON II.

FAITH is the GIFT of GOD.

From the ſame Text.

Sermons

ON

REGENERATION.

SERMON I.

OF THE CHARACTER OF THE UNREGENERATE.

EPHES. II. 1, 2.

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in treſpaſſes and ſins; wherein in time paſt ye walked according to the courſe of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the ſpirit that now worketh in the children of diſobedience.

AMONG all the various truſts which men can repoſe in each other, hardly any appears to be more ſolemn and tremendous, than the direction of their ſacred time, and eſpecially of thoſe hours which they ſpend in the exerciſe of public devotion. Theſe ſeaſons take up ſo ſmall a part of our lives, when compared with that which the labours and recreations of them demand; and ſo much depends upon their being managed aright, that we, who are called to aſſiſt you in the employment and improvement of them, can hardly be too ſolicitous,

that we discharge the trust, in a manner which we may answer to God and to you. If this thought dwell upon the mind with due weight, it will have some sensible influence upon our discourses to you, as well as on the strain of those addresses which we present to the Throne of Grace in your name, and on your account. We shall not be over anxious about the order of words, the elegance of expression, or the little graces of composition or delivery; but shall study to speak on the most important subjects, and to handle them with such gravity and seriousness, with such solemnity and spirit, as may, through the Divine Blessing, be most likely to penetrate the hearts of our hearers, to awaken those that are entirely unconcerned about religion, and to animate and assist those, who, being already acquainted with it, desire to make continual advances, which will be the case of every truly good man.

It is my earnest prayer for myself, and for my brethren in the ministry of all denominations, that we may, in this respect, approve our wisdom and integrity to God, and *commend ourselves to the consciences of all men* (1). It is our charge that we shall answer it another day to *the God of the spirits of all flesh*, to use our prudent and zealous endeavours, to make men truly wise and good, virtuous and happy: but to this purpose, it is by no means sufficient to content ourselves, merely with attempting to reform the immoralities and irregularities of their lives, and to bring them to an external behaviour, decent, honourable, and useful. An undertaking like this, while the inward temper is neglected, even when it may seem most effectual, will be but like painting the face of one who is ready to die, or labouring to repair a ruinous house, by plastering and adorning its walls, while its foundations are decayed. There is an awful passage in *Ezekiel* to this purpose, which I hope we shall often recollect (2): *Wo to the foolish prophets,—because they have seduced my people, saying, Peace, when there was*

(1) 2 Cor. iv. 2. (2) Ezek. xiii. 10—14.

no peace; and one built up a wall, and lo, others daubed it with untempered mortar: say unto them that daub it with untempered mortar, that it shall fall:—Thus saith the Lord God, I will even rent it with a stormy wind in my fury: and there shall be an overflowing shower in mine anger, and great hail stones in my fury to consume it: so will I break down the wall that ye have daubed with untempered mortar, and bring it down to the ground, so that the foundation thereof shall be discovered, and it shall fall, and ye shall be consumed in the midst thereof; and ye shall know that I am the Lord.

If there be any, in one body of Christians or another, that abet men's natural disposition to flatter themselves *in a way that is not good*, by encouraging them to hope for salvation, because they were regularly baptized in their infancy; because they have diligently attended on public worship, in its established, or its separate forms; or merely because they do nobody any harm, but are rather kind and helpful to others; or because their faith is orthodox, their transports of affection warm, or their assurance confident; I pray God to awaken them by the power of his grace, before they are consumed, with their hearers, in the ruins of their deceitful building. Those of you who are my stated hearers can witness for me, that in this respect I have *delivered my own soul* (1). It has been the steady tenor of my doctrine among you, that our hope and confidence must be in Christ, and not in ourselves; and that, if we desire to be interested in the righteousness he has wrought out, and in the blessings he has purchased by his sacred blood, we must be experimentally acquainted with the work of God's renewing grace upon our souls, curing the inward distempers of our degenerate hearts, and transforming us into the image of his holiness: that is what we are taught in Scripture to call by the name of *Regeneration*; and considering how much the subject is neglected by some, and I fear I may add, misrepresented and disguised by others, I apprehend I shall profitably employ an evening-hour for several succeeding Sabbaths, in giving a larger ac-

(1) Ezek. xxxiii. 9.

count than I have yet done, of the ſcripture doctrine on this important ſubject and its various parts. It ſhall be my care in the ſeries of theſe diſcourſes, as God ſhall enable me, to *ſpeak the words of truth and ſoberneſs* (1); and I entreat you to have recourſe *to the law and to the teſtimony* (2), that ye may judge of the truth and weight of what I ſay. I deſire not to be regarded any farther, than I produce evidence from reaſon and ſcripture; but ſo far as we are diſregarded while we have the concurrent teſtimony of both, our hearers muſt ſee to it; and their danger will then be proportionable to the importance of thoſe truths, which their negligence, or their prejudice, engage them either to reject, or to overlook.

The plan, on which I intend to proceed in the courſe of theſe Lectures, is this:

I. I will endeavour to deſcribe the character of thoſe, whom we may properly call perſons in an unregenerate ſtate.

II. I will deſcribe the nature of that change, which may properly be called Regeneration, or Converſion.

III. I will ſhew at large the abſolute neceſſity of this change, and the conſequent miſery of thoſe that are ſtrangers to it.

IV. I ſhall endeavour to prove the reality and neceſſity of the Divine influences on the mind, in the production of ſuch a change.

V. I ſhall deſcribe ſome of thoſe various methods, by which God is pleaſed to operate in the production of this holy and important work.

VI. I ſhall propoſe ſome advices to thoſe who are already awakened, as to the method in which they are to ſeek renewing and converting grace. After which,

(1) Acts xxvi. 27. (2) Iſa. viii. 20.

VII. I ſhall conclude theſe diſcourſes with an *addreſs* to thoſe who have experienced this *happy change*, as to the manner in which they ought to be affected with ſuch a ſeries of Sermons as this, and the improvement they ſhould make of what they are to hear and what they have felt agreeable to it.

I ſhould be peculiarly inexcuſable, if I entered upon ſuch a ſubject, without earneſt and importunate prayers to the Fountain of light, grace, and holineſs, that while you hear of this important doctrine, you may have that experimental knowledge of it, without which ſuch diſcourſes will indeed ſeem obſcure and enthuſiaſtical, according to the degree in which they are rational and ſpiritual. I ſhall only add, that theſe *lectures* will take their riſe from a variety of *texts*, which I ſhall not, according to my uſual method, largely open and dilate upon, but only touch on them as ſo many *mottos* to the reſpective *ſermons* to which they are prefixed.

As I intend not *philoſophical eſſays*, but plain, practical, and popular addreſſes, I ſhall begin,

Firſt, With deſcribing the *character* of thoſe, whom we may properly call *unconverted* and *unregenerated* perſons.

It is abſolutely neceſſary that I ſhould do this, that you may reſpectively know your own perſonal concern in what is further to be laid before you in the proceſs of theſe lectures.

Now you have the general character of ſuch, in the words of my text; and a very ſad one it is: They are repreſented, as *dead in treſpaſſes and ſins*, utterly indiſpoſed both for the actions and enjoyments of the ſpiritual and divine life; as *walking according to the courſe of this world*, a ſad intimation that it was the ſtate of the generality of mankind; nay, *according to the prince of the power of the air*, that impure and wicked *ſpirit*, *who works*, or exerts his energy, *in the children of diſobedience*, that is, in thoſe who reject and deſpiſe the goſpel; in which it is implied, (and a dreadful implication it is) that the courſe and conduct of thoſe, who reject the goſpel, is *according to* the deſire and inſtigation of *the prince of darkneſs*: they are going on as the devil himſelf would have them, and chooſe that path for themſelves, which he

chooſes for them, as leading them to moſt certain and moſt aggravated ruin.

And who are theſe unhappy perſons? Surely there muſt be ſome of them among us: for who can flatter himſelf, that in ſo numerous an aſſembly, *the courſe of all* is different from *that of the world;* and that all have happily triumphed over the artifices of that accurſed ſpirit, who is, by God's righteous permiſſion, become *its prince*, while it continues in its apoſtate ſtate? I ſhall however think it a very happy point gained, if I could convince any of you, who are juſtly liable to that conviction, that *you are the men;* if I could, as it were, render viſible to your eyes thoſe ſubtil, yet ſtrongly complicated chains, in which Satan is binding you, and by which he is drawing you on to eternal ruin; that you might *recover yourſelves out of the ſnare of the devil, who are led captive by him at his pleaſure.*(1)

I am this evening to deſcribe the *character* of unregenerate men: but I cannot pretend to do it in all the variety of circumſtances which may attend it. I ſhall therefore mention only ſome particulars which are moſt important, and which moſt certainly demonſtrate a perſon to be of that wretched number. There are a great variety of countenances in the human ſpecies; yet the principal features in all are the ſame, though their proportion and lineaments may differ: and I apprehend, the characters which I am now to lay down, will moſt of them ſuit every unregenerate perſon, though they may appear in various perſons in different degrees and different inſtances. I ſhall chiefly lay down theſe characters in negatives, as I apprehend it is the ſafeſt way: and would only obſerve, what you may eaſily imagine, that I ſpeak only of the adult; for I would cautiouſly avoid entangling this Diſcourſe with what relates purely to the caſe of infants, leſt *Satan ſhould get an advantage over us*, and turn that into an occaſion to amuſe curioſity, which I humbly hope, under the influence of the Spirit of God, will be a means of awakening conviction, and of breaking that deluſive peace, in which, like *the ſtrong man armed*, he keeps his vaſſals, till the fatal hour come which is to complete their ruin.

(1) 2 Tim. ii. 26.

To wave the formality of laboured demonſtrations in a caſe which admits of ſuch eaſy evidence, I ſhall go upon this obvious principle in the whole of my reaſoning: "That to be *regenerate*, and to be *born of God*, are in ſcripture terms of the ſame import; and conſequently, that whatever *temper* and *diſpoſition* is in ſcripture declared to be *inconſiſtent* with the *character* of *a child of God*, muſt neceſſarily denominate a man *an unregenerate perſon*." And one would think this principle could hardly be diſputed, ſince all that allow of regeneration at all, in a Chriſtian ſenſe, ſeem to underſtand by it that change, whatever it is, by which a perſon is made *a child of God*, and by conſequence *an heir of heaven*.

Now on this principle, you may take the marks of an unregenerate perſon in ſuch particulars as theſe; and let thoſe, whoſe conſcience owns them, hear and tremble.

1. The ſoul "that never ſeriouſly inquired into its ſpiritual ſtate," is, beyond all doubt, an unregenerate ſoul.

The Apoſtle earneſtly preſſes it upon the Chriſtians to whom he wrote, that they ſhould diligently *examine themſelves whether they were in the faith* (1): and he who has entirely neglected to do it, ſeems to expreſs, not merely a forgetfulneſs of religion, but even a contempt of it too. Nevertheleſs, be it known unto you, Sirs, that an humble return to God, and a cordial dedication of ſoul to his ſervice, is not ſo ſlight an act of a man's life, that it ſhould paſs without any obſervation in doing it, or any ſerious reflection on having done it. *Religion* is a deliberate thing; it brings a man ſeriouſly to *conſider his ways* that he may *turn his feet to God's commandments* (2); to *ſearch and try them*, that he may *turn again unto the Lord* (3). A good man is ſo impreſſed with the thoughts of God, and of eternity, that perhaps he is rather ready to be over anxiouſly afraid and ſuſpicious, in a matter of ſo great importance: and therefore will review on the one hand, the plan of ſalvation that God has laid down in his word, and on the other, the correſpondency to it that he may diſcover in his own ſoul; and if there are any of you that have never been thus employed, any that have never ſeparated yourſelves awhile from other em-

(1) 2 Cor. xiii. 5. (2) Pſal. cxix. 59. (3) Lam. iii. 40.

ployments, that you might *ſeek and intermeddle with this* Divine *wiſdom* (1), you are aſſuredly ſtrangers to it. If there are any of you, that have never ſtudied God's word, to learn his will from thence; that have never attended to ſermons, that you might try yourſelves by them, and, if poſſible, carry home ſomething of the chief of what you hear, to aſſiſt your retired and more diligent inquiries; you may now come to a very quick concluſion, and before you leave this place, yea, before I proceed to any further particulars, you may ſet it down as the memorable beginning of theſe lectures, and of this diſcourſe, "I am already proved to be an unregenerate creature: I am *in the gall of bitterneſs, and in the bond of iniquity* (2)." Nay, you may add, that there are perhaps thouſands of thoſe that are unregenerate ſinners, who have not been ſo careleſs and ſo inſenſible as you. For indeed, Sirs, a man may begin an examination, and ſtart back from the proſecution of it, before it is brought to any important iſſue; or trying himſelf by falſe characters, he may come to a concluſion, which will be ſo much the more dangerous, as it has been the more deliberate. For the ſake of ſuch therefore, I add,

2. The ſoul "that is not deeply convinced of its guilt before God, and deſirous to ſeek deliverance from it by the Lord Jeſus Chriſt," is ſtill in an unregenerate ſtate.

All the promiſes of God's paternal favour do certainly imply the promiſe of forgiveneſs; and you well know, that theſe are appropriated to ſuch as humble themſelves before God: and that humbling which is merely external, and implies no deep ſenſe of inward guilt, can paſs for very little with that God, *who ſearches the heart, and tries the reins of the children of men* (3).

The Scripture aſſures us, that *whoſoever believes that Jeſus is the Chriſt, is born of God* (4); and nothing can be more certain from the whole tenor of it, than that *he that believes not, ſhall be damned* (5); and ſurely a ſtate of *damnation* is not, and cannot be, a ſtate of *regeneration*. But what is this faith in Chriſt? Is it no more than a bare notional perſuaſion, that he is the Son of God? If this were all,

(1) Prov. xviii. 1. (2) Acts viii. 23.
(3) Jer. xvii. 10. (4) 1 John v. 1. (5) Mark xvi. 16.

the *devils* themſelves *believe*(1); and many were the inſtances, in which you know that they confeſſed it, and *trembled* before him. You cannot then be ignorant, that *the faith*, to which the promiſes of ſalvation are made, is a *faith* which *receives the Lord Jeſus Chriſt in all his offices*; which truſts his *atonement*, as well as admits his *revelation*; and flies to him for *righteouſneſs* and *life*. And how can that man ſeek *righteouſneſs* from *Chriſt*, who is inſenſible of his own *guilt*? or how can he depend on him for *life*, who is not aware that he is under a ſentence of *death* and *condemnation*?

But imagine not you are ſecure, becauſe you acknowledge yourſelves to be ſinners. If that acknowledgement be ſlight and formal, it ſhews you are ſtrangers to the operation of that Spirit, whoſe office it is to *convince* men *of ſin*(2). If you have not been made ſenſible of the pollution of your hearts as well as the rebellion of your lives; if you have not *received* as it were a *ſentence of death in yourſelves*, and ſubmitted to that ſentence as righteous, though ever ſo dreadful; if you have not been made to *loath and abhor yourſelves, and to repent in duſt and aſhes*(3); if you have not *laid your hand on your mouth*(4), and *your mouth in the duſt*(5), *crying out, Unclean, unclean*(6); and in this ſenſe at leaſt, adopted that pathetic complaint, *O wretched man that I am, who ſhall deliver me*(7)! it is a certain ſign, that *ſin* ſtill *reigns in your mortal bodies*(8), and is unto this day *bringing forth fruit unto death*(9).

3. The ſoul "that is unconcerned about the favour of God, and communion with him," is ſtill in an unregenerate ſtate.

Common reaſon may tell you, that a ſoul deſtitute of the love of God, can never be the object of his complacential regards; and that it is impoſſible you ſhould love him, while you are unconcerned about his favour, and habitually indifferent to converſe with him. You believe there is a God: you acknowledge that he is the great benefactor of the whole world; you know your happineſs depends upon his favour; you wiſh therefore that you

(1) Jam. ii. 19. (2) John xvi. 8. (3) Job xlii. 5.
(4) Mich. vii. 16. (5) Lam. iii. 29. (6) Levit xiii. 46.
(7) Rom. vii. 24. (8) Rom. vi. 12. (9) Rom. vii. 5.

may enjoy it; that is, you wish, that some way or other you may be happy, rather than miserable. But let conscience say, whether you have ever felt, that *in his favour is life* (1)? whether you have ever known what it is to cry out with intenseness and ardour of soul, *Lord, lift up the light of thy countenance upon me* (2)? Alas, Sirs, had you been *sons, God* would have *sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts* (3); and if this be not the sincere, if it be not the habitual language of your soul; if you do not thus earnestly desire to live under the manifestations of the divine love, and to be able to say, *truly our communion is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ* (4); you are spiritually dead, and under the fatal influences of that *carnal mind, which*, being *enmity against God* (5), engages men to live contented *without God in the world* (6), so long as *their corn and their wine increase* (7). A heart, thus alienated from God, was never savingly turned to him, and can have no just reason to imagine itself the object of his paternal favour.

4. The soul "that is destitute of a sincere love to mankind," has reason to consider itself as in an unregenerate state.

You may, perhaps, think it unnecessary to mention this; but the Apostle was undoubtedly a much better judge, and his own words suggest this particular to me: *Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God: he that loveth not, knoweth not God*, and consequently cannot be born of him; *for God is love* (8). And our Lord strongly intimates the same thought, when he exhorts his disciples to the most universal and unlimited benevolence by this argument, *that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven* (9); plainly implying, that otherwise they could not really be born of God, or claim him for their Father. Regeneration is to form a man for intimate communion with *the general assembly and church of the first born* (10), and to prepare him for the region of com-

(1) Psal. xxx. 5. (2) Psal. iv. 6. (3) Gal. iv. 6.
(4) 1 John i. 3. (5) Rom. viii. 7. (6) Eph. ii. 12.
(7) Psal. iv. 7. (8) 1 John iv. 7, 8. (9) Mat. v. 45.
(10) Heb. xii. 23.

plete and everlasting love; and the first fruits of it are to appear, and to be manifested here. *It is a faithful saying, that they who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works* (1); and unfeigned love is to be the root of them; so that if you cannot stand this trial, your religious hopes are all delusive and vain.

Let me entreat you therefore, that you would now look into your lives and hearts. Do any of the malignant passions harbour there? Ask yourselves, "Is there any of my fellow-creatures, whom I wish to see miserable; or would make so, if it were in my power to do it by the secret act of my will, so that no mortal on earth should ever know me to be the cause of the calamity?" If it be so, and this be your settled temper, *you hate your brethren*, and *are murderers* (2); and therefore *are the children of the devil, who was a murderer from the beginning*; and we may thus say of you, in the very words of our Lord, who never uttered a rash censure: *You are of your father the devil*, for his passions you cherish, *and his lusts you* would *do* (3).

But reflect farther, If you wish others no harm, do you really wish them well? and that so really, and so sincerely, as to be ready to do them good? For merely *to say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled* (4), when you have it in your power to help them, is at once to *mock the poor*, and to *despise him that made him* (5). You that are conscious of a mean selfish temper, and wrap yourselves up, as it were, in your own separate interests, or in those of your own families, and can feel a concern for no others; you that devise what you may imagine shrewd and prudent things, but none that are liberal and compassionate; you whose eye does not affect your heart, when you see the distresses of your brethren, while you *have this world's good, how dwelleth the love of God in you* (6)? How can you imagine, you are the children of him, whom you so little resemble?

Nay, permit me to add once more upon this head, that if all your compassion is only moved by men's temporal calamities, and works not in any degree with respect to their spiritual and eternal interests, you have

(1) Tit. iii. 8. (2) 1 John iii. 15. (3) John viii. 44.
(4) Jam. ii. 16. (5) Prov. xvii. 5. (6) 1 John iii. 17.

reason to fear, that it is no better than an unsanctified humanity; and indeed, that you never have learnt the worth of your own souls, while you set so little value on the souls of others, even of those, to whom you profess and intend friendship. And this concluding hint is of importance to prevent a dangerous mistake, in which too many good natured sinners are ready to flatter themselves, and in which, perhaps, others are too ready to join in flattering them.

5. He "that does not know what it is, to struggle with indwelling sin, and heartily to resolve against indulging it in any kind or degree," is undoubtedly still in an unregenerate state.

You will observe, I do not say, "that every one who knows what it is, to feel a struggle in his own mind, when assaulted by temptations to sin, is a truly good man:" the contrary is dreadfully apparent. A principle of natural conscience often makes very strong remonstrances against sin, and sends out bitter cries when subjected to its violence; and this is so far from denominating a man a real Christian, that it rather illustrates the power of sin, and aggravates its guilt. But when a man's inclinations run entirely one way, and when he gives a swing to his natural passions without any guard or restraint: when he is a stranger to any inward conflict with himself, and any victory over his own lusts, and his corrupted will; it is a certain sign, he is yet under the dominion of Satan, and is even to be numbered among the tamest of his slaves. For *they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts* (1); have learnt to *deny themselves* (2), and to *mortify their members upon the earth* (3).

It is also of great importance to add, that there must be "a resolution to oppose sin in every kind, and in every degree;" for *he that is born of God sinneth not* (4); nay, it is elsewhere said, *He cannot commit sin* (5): and though it is too visibly true in fact, and apparent from several other passages in the very Epistle whence these words are taken, that this expression is to be interpreted with some

(1) Gal. v. 24. (2) Mat. xvi. 24. (3) Col. iii. 5.
(4) 1 John v. 18. (5) 1 John iii. 9.

limitation; yet the leaſt that it can be imagined to ſignify is this, that he does not wilfully allow himſelf in the practice of any ſin. He has learnt to *hate every falſe way*, and to *eſteem all God's precepts, concerning all things, to be right* (1); ſo that upon the whole, *if he might have his requeſt, and God would grant him the thing that he longs for* (2), it would be this, to ſin no more, and get rid of every ſentiment, deſire, and affection, in any degree contrary to the purity of God's nature and law. If, therefore, there be any of you, *that ſpare one accurſed thing*, though you ſhould ſeem eager on deſtroying all the reſt; if it be the ſecret language of your ſoul, "There is but one luſt that I will indulge; there is but one temptation that I will comply with;" I perceive *your hearts are not right in the ſight of God* (3); for though you could, according to your pretended purpoſe, *keep all* the reſt of *the law, and yet offend* in this *one point* alone, you would, in effect, be *a tranſgreſſor of all* (4). In ſhort, *He that committeth ſin is of the devil* (5); but *he that is begotten of God, keepeth himſelf, and that wicked one toucheth him not* (6).

6. He "that does not know what it is, to overcome this world, and to place his happineſs in another," is yet in an unregenerate ſtate.

This is another of thoſe certain marks, which God has given us of his own children. *Whatſoever is born of God*, (as it is very emphatically expreſſed in the original) *overcometh the world* (7). It is not, you ſee, the extraordinary attainment of a few more eminent Chriſtians; but it is an eſſential branch of every good man's character; for he is *begotten again unto a lively hope, by the reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt from the dead*, even *to* the hope of *an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away* (8). You have reaſon, therefore, to judge very uncomfortably concerning your ſtate, if you are ſtrangers to this *lively hope*; which is a very different thing from that *hope to be ſaved*, of which ſome people talk in ſo indolent, not to ſay, in ſo profane a manner, as to ſhew, that it is *the hope of the hypocrite*, which *will periſh, when God*

(1) Pſal. cxix. 128. (2) Job vi. 8. (3) Acts viii. 21.
(4) Jam. ii. 10. (5) 1 John iii. 8. (6) 1 John v. 18.
(7) 1 John v. 4. πᾶν τὸ γεγεννημένον ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ. (8) 1 Pet. i. 3, 4.

takes away his ſoul (1). If you are conſcious to yourſelves, that you *mind earthly things*, your *end* will be *deſtruction* (2), for having *your heart on earth*, it is plain *your* only *treaſure is here* (3): and if you govern yourſelves by worldly maxims alone, and your great care be to obtain thoſe riches and honours, which the children of the world purſue; if the importance of eternity has never appeared in ſuch a light, as to make you judge every thing trifling that can come in competition with it; nay, whatever your views of eternity have been, if you are not practically carrying on a ſcheme for it; and if you cannot, and do not, deny your worldly intereſt, when it cannot be ſecured without hazarding your eternal hopes; it is plain you are *friends of the world*, in ſuch a ſenſe as none can be, but he muſt be *an enemy of God* (4). If indeed *you were dead* to the world, *and your life hid with Chriſt in God*, you would *ſet your affections on things above*, on thoſe things which are there, *where Chriſt ſitteth on the right hand of God* (5): but the want of this temper ſhews, that you are *carnally minded*, *which* it *is death to be* (6); and that the redeeming love of Chriſt has never exerted its influence upon your ſouls, nor his croſs had any due efficacy upon you; for if it had, *the world* would have been *crucified to you, and you to the world* (7).

7. The ſoul "that does not long for greater improvements in the divine life," is ſtill a ſtranger to the *firſt principles* of it.

You know, that we are *called*, as Chriſtians, with *an high and holy calling* (8); and *as he* that is the author of this *calling*, *is holy, ſo are we* to be *holy in all manner of converſation* (9), and to be *perfect, even as our Father which is in heaven is perfect* (10). Here will therefore be room for improvement, not only during our continuance in the preſent life, but through all the ages of a glorious eternity; and it is the ardent deſire of every good man, that in this ſenſe above all others, *his path may be like the ſhining light, that ſhineth more and more, until the perfect day* (11).

(1) Job viii. 13. xxvii. 8. (2) Phil. iii. 19. (3) Mat. vi. 21.
(4) Jam. iv. 4. (5) Col. iii. 1, 2, 3. (6) Rom. viii. 6.
(7) Gal. vi. 14. (8) Phil. iii. 14. 2 Tim. i. 9.
(9) 1 Pet. i. 15. (10) Mat. v. 48. (11) Prov. iv. 18.

And *this* is the *one thing* that he does, or that in which all his labours centre; being conſcious to himſelf how far he is from *having already attained, or being already perfect, forgetting the things that are behind,* he *reacheth forth unto thoſe things that are before,* and *preſſes toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Chriſt Jeſus* (1). In this view he ſeriouſly conſiders the circumſtances of life in which Providence has placed him; that he may obſerve the advantages, which theſe circumſtances give him for religious improvements; and it is delightful to him to diſcover ſuch advantages.

Now if there be any of you, who know nothing of this temper, you are certainly in an unregenerate ſtate; for none can be born of God, that do not love him; and none can truly love him, that do not earneſtly deſire, more and more to reſemble him. So that if your hearts can indulge ſuch a thought as this, "I wiſh I knew how much religion would be juſt ſufficient to ſave me, and I would go ſo far, and ſtop there;" your conſcience muſt tell you, that you ſecretly *hate religion,* and are unwillingly dragged toward the form of it, by an unnatural and external violence, the fear of miſery and ruin in neglecting it; and that you are not acted by the free and liberal principle of a nature ſavingly renewed.

8. The ſoul "that does not know what it is, to live by faith in *Chriſt,* and in dependence on his *Spirit,*" is ſtill in an unregenerate ſtate.

We *are all the children of God, by faith in Chriſt Jeſus* (2), if indeed we are ſo at all; and *he that is joined to the Lord,* in this ſenſe, *is one ſpirit* with him (3). But *if any man have not the Spirit of Chriſt, he is none of his* (4), for as *God has predeſtinated us to the adoption of children, by Jeſus Chriſt, to himſelf* (5), ſo *of his fulneſs* it is, that *all* believers do *receive, even grace for grace* (6), or an abundance and variety of grace, by virtue of their union with him, *who is the head: from whom the whole body, being fitly joined together, and ſtrengthened by what every joint ſupplies, by an energy proportionable to every part, increaſes to the edifying of itſelf in*

(1) Phil. iii. 12—14. (2) Gal. iii. 26. (3) 1 Cor. vi. 17.
(4) Rom. viii. 9. (5) Epheſ. i. 5. (6) John i. 16.

love (1). These things, as you see, are not only hinted in Scripture, but are copiously insisted upon, as very material points; and though I readily acknowledge, good men may apprehend and consider them very differently, and may express those apprehensions in different phrases; yet as experience makes it plain, that those souls generally flourish most, who have the most distinct conceptions of them, and the most habitual regard to them; so I think it is plain from these Scriptures, that there can be no religion at all, where there is a total insensibility of them. If, therefore, there are any of you, that apprehend it is *enthusiasm* to talk of the *assistances of the Spirit*; nay, I will add, if there are any of you, that do not earnestly desire *these assistances*, and do not seek them daily from the hand of Christ, as the great covenant-head of his people; you are, I fear, strangers to some of *the first principles of the oracles of God* (2), and are *sensual, not having the Spirit* (3). And though you may now and then form a hasty, and perhaps a warm resolution in religion, you will quickly, with *the* proud *youth* that are conceited of their own sufficiency, *faint and be weary*, and with *the young men* you *will utterly fail*; while *they* only *that wait upon the Lord, shall renew their strength, shall mount up as on eagles' wings*, and, pressing on with an unwearied pace, according to the different degrees of vigour which the different parts of their course may require, *shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint* (4). In short, if you do not *thirst after the water of life*, that is, (as the Evangelist himself explains it) *the spirit, which they that believe on Christ shall receive* (5), however bountiful he is, he makes no promise to impart it to you; and if you never receive it, all your other sources of comfort will soon be dried up, and the miserable condition of the creature, that asked in vain for one drop of *water* to *cool his tormented tongue* (6), will certainly be yours.

Here I apprehend multitudes will miscarry, who have *made a fair shew* in the eyes of men; and if you are condemned by this mark, I am sure you will not be acquitted by any of the preceding. For all the branches of an

(1) Ephes. iv. 15, 16. (2) Heb. v. 12. (3) Jude, verse 9.
(4) Isa. xl. 30, 31. (5) John vii. 39. (6) Luke xvi. 24.

holy temper have ſuch a connexion with this, and ſuch a dependence upon it, that a man, who is deſtitute of this, can have only the ſemblance of the reſt.

And thus, Sirs, I have with all plainneſs and faithfulneſs, as in the ſight of God, and ſenſible of my account to him, laid before you a variety of hints, by which I think you may ſafely and truly judge, whether you be, or be not, in an unregenerate ſtate: and I ſhall now beg leave to conclude this Diſcourſe with one plain inference from the whole, *viz.*

That *baptiſm* is not *regeneration*, in the ſcriptural and moſt important ſenſe of the word.

To prove this as a *corollary* from the preceding Diſcourſe, I ſhall only aſſume this moſt reaſonable conceſſion, with which you may remember I at firſt ſet out; "that *regeneration*, and *being born of God*, ſignify the ſame thing." Now I have ſhewn you from a variety of *ſcriptures*, under the former heads, that *every one* whom the Sacred Oracles repreſent *as born of God, receiveth Chriſt, overcometh the world*, and *ſinneth not*. But it is too plain, that theſe characters do not agree to every one that is baptized: and conſequently it evidently follows, that every one who is baptized is not of courſe born of God, or regenerate; and therefore, that *baptiſm* is not *ſcripture regeneration*.

I think no mathematical demonſtration plainer, and more certain than this concluſion; and therefore, whatever great and ancient names may be urged on the other ſide of the queſtion, I ſhall reſt the matter here, without leading you into the niceties of a controverſy ſo eaſily decided. I would only further obſerve, that they who moſt vigorouſly contend for the other *manner of ſpeaking* (for after all it is but a diſpute about *a word*) acknowledge expreſsly, that a man may be *ſaved without* what they call *regeneration*, and that he may *periſh with it*. And though perſons are taught to ſpeak of their ſtate, in conſequence of baptiſm, in very high, and, I fear, dangerous terms; yet when wiſe and good men come to explain thoſe terms, it evidently appears, that many of whom they are uſed, are ſo in a ſtate of ſalvation as to be daily obnoxious to damnation; ſo the children of God, as alſo

to be the children of the devil; and ſo inheritors of the kingdom of heaven, as to be children of wrath, and on the brink of hell.

Where perſons of real piety apprehend themſelves under a neceſſity of uſing ſuch phraſes with reſpect to all that are *baptized*, we cannot blame them for endeavouring to bring down their ſignification as low as poſſible: but they will, I hope, excuſe thoſe who chooſe to ſpeak, in what they apprehend to be a more ſcriptural, rational, and edifying language.

It was matter of conſcience with me, to ſtate the matter as you have heard. I do therefore earneſtly intreat you, my dearly beloved, in the name of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and for the ſake of your own immortal ſouls, that you *deceive not yourſelves with vain words*; but that where your eternal ſalvation is ſo plainly concerned, you bring the cauſe, the important cauſe, to an immediate trial: and if you are convinced, as I ſuppoſe many of you quickly may be, that you are at preſent *dead in treſpaſſes and ſins*, then let me beſeech you to reflect on what the moſt tranſient ſurvey of the Scripture may teach you, as to the danger of ſuch a caſe. For though it will be my buſineſs, in the proceſs of theſe Diſcourſes, more largely to repreſent it, when I come to ſpeak of *the neceſſity of the new birth*, God only knows, whether your lives may be continued, till we advance ſo far in the ſubject: and where a caſe of this kind is in queſtion, the delay of a week, or even of a day, may be inevitable and eternal ruin.

SERMON II.

OF THE NATURE OF REGENERATION, AND PARTICULARLY OF THE CHANGE IT PRODUCES IN MEN'S APPREHENSIONS.

2 COR. V. 17.

If any man be in Chriſt, he is a new creature; old things are paſſed away, behold, all things are become new.

THE knowledge of our true ſtate in religion, is at once a matter of ſo great importance, and ſo great difficulty, that, in order to obtain it, it is neceſſary we ſhould have *line upon line*, and *precept upon precept*. The plain Diſcourſe, which you heard laſt Lord's day, was intended to lead you into it; and I queſtion not, but I then ſaid enough to convince many, that they were in an unregenerate condition. Nevertheleſs, as there are various approaches towards regeneration and converſion, which on the whole fall ſhort of it; I think it very expedient now to give you, what I may properly enough call *the counter-part* of this view; which I ſhall, by Divine Aſſiſtance, attempt from the words I have now been reading.

The Apoſtle, who wrote them, was tranſported to ſuch a zeal for Chriſt, and for the ſouls of men, that ſome thought him *beſide himſelf* (1); and no doubt many would repreſent him, as the greateſt enthuſiaſt upon the face of the earth. But as it was *a very ſmall thing to him to be judged of man's judgment* (2), he calmly vindicates

(1) Verſe 13. (2) 1 Cor. iv. 3.

himſelf, by declaring that there was a cauſe for all this warmth, as the honour of God, and the Redeemer, and the eternal ſalvation of men, were ſo intimately concerned in the affair: *The love of Chriſt*, ſays he, *conſtrains us* (1), or, (as the word, *properly ſignifies) *it bears us away with it*, like a mighty torrent, which we are not able to reſiſt; *becauſe we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead*, under the ſentence of God's righteous law, or they would not have needed ſuch an atonement as the blood of his Son; *and* we farther judge, *that he died for all, that they who* now *live*, only in conſequence of his dying love, *ſhould not henceforth live unto themſelves, but unto him that died for them* (2). We therefore live to this Jeſus; we conſecrate our lives and labours to this purpoſe; and in conſequence of it, *we henceforth know no man after the fleſh*, that is, we do not regard our temporal intereſts, nor conſider how we may moſt effectually obtain the favour and friendſhip of thoſe who may be uſeful to us in life; *yea, though we have known Chriſt after the fleſh*, or have expected a temporal Meſſiah, who ſhould make our nation triumphant over the Gentiles, and enrich it with the ſpoils of other nations, *yet now henceforth we know him no more* under ſuch a character (3). And in this reſpect the ſame temper will prevail in the heart of every real Chriſtian; and *therefore*, i. e. in conſequence of what was ſaid before of the Redeemer's love, *if any man be in Chriſt*, if he be really one of his faithful ſervants, united to him by a lively faith, and in conſequence of that union intereſted in his ſalvation, *he is a new creature*: his views and ſentiments, his affections and purſuits, are ſo entirely changed, that he ſeems, as it were, to be come into a new world, and to be transformed quite into another perſon from what he formerly was; *old things are paſſed away*, and *(behold* the aſtoniſhing transformation!) *all things are become new*. This is the thought that I am now to illuſtrate; and you cannot but ſee, how proper a foundation it will be for our Diſcourſe on the *ſecond general* I propoſed, which is,

Secondly, Particularly to deſcribe the *nature* of that great *change*, which paſſes on every ſoul, that is truly

(1) 2 Cor. v. 14. (2) 2 Cor. v. 15. (3) Verſe 16. * Συνεχει.

regenerate, in the ſcriptural, and moſt important ſenſe of the word.*

And here it may hardly ſeem neceſſary to tell you, that I do not mean to aſſert, that the ſubſtance of the ſoul, and its natural faculties, are in a ſtrict and proper ſenſe changed; a man might as reaſonably aſſert from ſuch a Scripture, that the former body was annihilated, and a new one produced; and common ſenſe and decency will not allow us to imagine, that the Apoſtle meant any thing of this nature, by the general terms he uſes here. But the plain meaning is, that when a man becomes a real Chriſtian, the whole temper and character of his mind is ſo changed, as to become different from that of the generality of mankind, and different from what it formerly was, while in an unenlightened and unrenewed ſtate. It is not merely a little circumſtantial alteration; it is not aſſuming a new name, profeſſing new ſpeculative opinions, or practiſing ſome new rites and forms: but it is becoming, (as we frequently ſay, in our uſual forms of ſpeech) a different creature, or a new man.—And thus the ſacred writers expreſs themſelves in many other paſſages, which very happily ſerve to illuſtrate this. They, in particular, repreſent God as promiſing, with relation to this work (1); *a new heart will I give them, and a new ſpirit will I put within them; and I will take away the heart of ſtone*, the ſtubborn, obſtinate, impenetrable diſpoſition they once had, *and will give them an heart of fleſh*, a tender, compliant temper, which ſhall incline them to ſubmit to my will with humility, and to obey it with delight. And thus, when the Apoſtle had exhorted the Epheſians (2) to *put off, with reſpect to their former converſation, the old man, which is corrupt according to its deceitful luſts*; he adds, *And be re-*

* Some chooſe to call the change here deſcribed, *renovation* rather than *regeneration*. I have given my reaſons before (See Poſtſcript) why I uſe the words promiſcuouſly: but I ſhall endeavour, through the whole of theſe Diſcourſes, ſo to ſtate the *nature* of this *change*, as to have no controverſy with good men of any perſuaſion about any thing but the *name* of it; concerning which, I hope, they will not contend with me, as I am ſure I will not quarrel with them.

(1) Ezek. xxxvi. 26. (2) Epheſ. iv. 22—24.

renewed in the ſpirit of your mind, and put on the new man, which after God, or in conformity to his image, *is created in righteouſneſs and true holineſs:* which is further illuſtrated by his important exhortation to the Romans (1), *Be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.* And on the ſame principles, what in one place he calls *the new creature* (2), in another parallel place he expreſſes, by *faith that works by love* (3), and by *keeping the commandments of God* (4); for all theſe, as equivalent characters, he oppoſes to *circumciſion and uncircumciſion*, or the mere externals of a religious profeſſion; declaring the utter inſufficiency of the latter, and the abſolute neceſſity of the former.

The general nature of this change may then be underſtood by an attentive conſideration of ſuch Scriptures as thoſe mentioned above; which indeed contain what is moſt eſſential on this ſubject. But for the more complete illuſtration of the matter, I ſhall particularly ſhew you, that where there is reaſon to ſpeak of a man, as one of thoſe who are in Chriſt Jeſus, or who are truly regenerate, there will be "New apprehenſions, new affections, new reſolutions, new labours, new enjoyments, and new hopes;" and perhaps there are few important branches of the Chriſtian character, which may not be introduced, as illuſtrating one or other of theſe remarks.

The former of them is indeed the foundation of the reſt; becauſe, as religion is *a reaſonable ſervice*, all the change which is made in the *affections* and *reſolutions*, in the *purſuits*, *enjoyments*, and *hopes* of a good man, ariſes from that different view, in which he is now taught to look on thoſe objects, the nature of which is to direct his choice, to determine his conduct, and regulate his paſſions; it will therefore be the buſineſs of this evening's Diſcourſe to ſhew you,

I. That wherever there is a real principle of regeneration, there will be NEW APPREHENSIONS of things.

When God created the natural world, he ſaid, in the very beginning of his work, *Let there be light, and there was light* (5): and thus he deals in this new creation,

(1) Rom. xii. 2. (2) Gal. vi. 15. (3) Gal. v. 6. (4) 1 Cor. vii. 19. (5) Gen. i. 3.

which raiſes the ſoul from a chaos, to ſuch a beautiful, well-ordered, and well-furniſhed frame. *God*, ſays the Apoſtle, *who commanded the light to ſhine out of darkneſs, has ſhined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jeſus Chriſt* (1); whereas before, *the underſtanding was darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that was in them, becauſe of the blindneſs* or perverſeneſs *of their hearts* (2).

Now this illumination, of which I am ſpeaking, does not ſo much refer to a ſpeculative, as to a practical and heart-impreſſing knowledge. It is true, that when a man once comes to be in good earneſt in religion, he generally arrives at a clearer and fuller knowledge, even of the doctrines of Chriſtianity, than he had before: for he then ſets himſelf to inquire with greater diligence, and to ſeek light of the great *Father of Lights* with greater earneſtneſs; he gets clear of many evil affections, that put a corrupt bias upon his judgment; and he comes within the reach of thoſe promiſes, *Then ſhall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord* (3); and *if any man will do his will, he ſhall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God* (4). Yet, I think, I may very properly ſay, that at various times, when our *judgment* of any object is the ſame, our *apprehenſions* of it are very different. It is one thing, for inſtance, to believe that God is the omnipotent, all-wiſe, and all-gracious governor of the world; and another, and very different thing, to have the heart powerfully impreſſed with an apprehenſion of his ability and readineſs to help us. I will, therefore, a little more particularly illuſtrate thoſe reſpects, in which the apprehenſions of ſuch as are really regenerate, differ from thoſe which they formerly had: and I hope you will do yourſelves the juſtice to reflect, as we go along, how far you have ever felt theſe apprehenſions which you hear me deſcribe; and I have a pleaſing perſuaſion, that many of you have felt them, in a much livelier manner than they can be deſcribed. I would obſerve then to you, that a regenerate ſoul has new apprehenſions "of *God*,—of *itſelf*,—of *Chriſt*,—of *eternity*,—and of *the way* and *method* that God has marked out for its being *happy* there."

(1) 2 Cor. iv. 6. (2) Epheſ. iv. 18. (3) Hoſ. vi. 3. (4) John vii. 17.

1. A regenerate ſoul has "*new apprehenſions* of the bleſſed *God*."

There are very few who pretend ſo much as to *doubt* of the being of a God; and fewer yet, that will venture to *deny* it: and even among thoſe, who have denied it, and diſputed againſt it, ſome, by their own confeſſion, have felt their hearts give them the lie, and upbraid them for uſing the powers of reaſon and ſpeech againſt the Giver and Preſerver of both. I perſuade myſelf at leaſt, there are none that hear me this day, who would not look upon a profeſſed Atheiſt as a monſter, unworthy to be a member of human ſociety, and little to be truſted in any of its relations. Yet after all, while the being of the bleſſed God is warmly aſſerted, his nature is ſo little underſtood and conſidered, that there are thouſands who may ſtill properly be ſaid to be *without God in the world* (1), or in practice and temper, though not in notion, to be Atheiſts in it. Wicked men therefore, in general, are deſcribed as thoſe that *know not God* (2): but where God has determined to glorify his mercy in the ſalvation of a ſinner, he *ſhines into the heart*, for this bleſſed purpoſe, *to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God* (3). And thus the glories of the Divine Being are known to the regenerate ſoul in ſuch a manner, as they are not to the moſt acute metaphyſician, or the ſublimeſt philoſopher, who is himſelf a ſtranger to the ſpiritual life.

The perſon of whom we now ſpeak, has new apprehenſions "of the *ſpirituality* and *omnipreſence* of *God*,—of his *majeſty* and *purity*,—of his *power* and *patience*,—of his *goodneſs*,—and his *intimate acceſs to men's ſpirits*, with the reality and importance of his *operations* upon them."—Permit me a little to repreſent the views of each, both to direct your inquiries, and alſo to impreſs your minds, and my own, with truths in which we have all ſo intimate a concern.

The divine *ſpirituality* and *omnipreſence* is apprehended by the good man in a peculiar manner. That there is ſome immaterial ſubſtance, and that matter is moved by his active power continually impreſſed upon it, accord-

(1) Eph. ii. 12. (2) 2 Theſſ. i. 8. (3) 2 Cor. iv. 6.

ing to ſtated laws, is indeed ſo plain a dictate of reaſon, that I queſtion not but the thought influences the minds of ſome, who have not ſo much acquaintance with language as to be able properly to expreſs it: but, alas! it eaſily paſſes through, as if no way important. It is quite a different thing to *feel*, as it were, the preſence of an infinitely intelligent and all-obſerving Deity, actually ſurrounding us in all times and places:—to ſay from the heart, *Oh Lord, thou haſt ſearched me, and known me*, ſo that *thou underſtandeſt my thoughts afar off: whither ſhall I go from thy ſpirit, or whither ſhall I flee from thy preſence? Thou haſt beſet me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me* (1);—to feel, as it were, the hand of God, which indeed we may feel, if we duly attend to it, in all the impreſſions made on our bodily ſenſes, and on the powers of our mind;—to feel ourſelves even now ſupported by it, and to argue from the conſtant ſupport of his hand, the never-failing notice of his eye. "He reads my preſent thoughts; he knows, even now, all the ſecrets of my ſoul, and has always known them; has always obſerved my conduct in every the minuteſt particular; and recorded, in permanent characters, the whole hiſtory of my life, and of my heart; of this depraved, ſinful life, of this vain, this treacherous, this rebellious heart."

With this conception of the divine obſervance are cloſely and intimately connected new apprehenſions of the *purity of God*, and of his infinite *Majeſty*; views, which mutually aſſiſt and illuſtrate each other. The irreverence with which the generality of men behave in the preſence of God, and the eaſineſs with which they admit the ſlighteſt temptation to ſin againſt him, plainly ſhew what low notions they have of him: but God does, as it were, appear to the eye of a renewed mind, arrayed in his robes of light and majeſty; ſo that he is ready to cry out, "*I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye ſeeth thee* (2): I ſee the eternal, ſelf-exiſtent, ſelf-ſufficient God, who *ſits upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as graſshoppers; who ſpreadeth out the heavens as a tent to dwell in*, and looks down on *the nations as the drop of a bucket, and counts them as the ſmall duſt*

(1) Pſal. cxxxix. 1—7. (2) Job xiii. 5.

of the balance (1): *who would not fear before him? who would not tremble at his presence* (2)? who would not revere that God, *who is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look upon iniquity* (3)? *who cannot be tempted with evil* (4), but must see it, and hate it, even in all its forms?"

And such too are the views it has of his *almighty power*, that the enlightened mind will further add, "A God of almighty power, who could speak a whole world into ruin (undoubtedly he could, for he spoke it into existence) who by one single thought, by one silent volition, could easily abase the proudest creature in the universe; must have it in his power to bring me in a moment to the dust of death, and to the flames of hell; to lay me as low in misery, and to hold me as long in it as he should please: This, O my soul, this is the God, against whom such feeble worms as we are daily offending, and whom we madly presume to make our enemy."

This gives the regenerate man a further sense of the *patience of God*, than ever he had before. Others may look round upon the world, and wonder there is so much penal evil in it; but the renewed soul wonders there is not a thousand times more. When he sees, how *the world lieth in wickedness* (5); when he observes, how poor, impotent mortals are, many of them perhaps, in words blaspheming the God of Heaven: many more of them, most presumptuously violating all the plainest and most important precepts of his law; and most of the rest, living in a perpetual forgetfulness of him, as if he were not at all, or were not so considerable as to be any way worth their notice; such an one cannot but wonder, that the Almighty Majesty of Heaven does not in a moment make himself known by the *thunder of his power*, and confound all their madness and folly, by crushing the world with its inhabitants into ruin. He often sees the rising sun, and the descending rain, with astonishment that it should be sent down on such a world as ours.

He has also more affecting views than ever of the *Divine Goodness*. Most men speculatively believe it;

(1) Isa. xl. 15, 22. (2) Jer. v. 22. (3) Hab. i. 13.
(4) Jam. i. 13. (5) 1 John v. 19.

and they take occaſion, even from that belief, to affront it; but a good man views it at once as a delightful and a venerable thing: he *fears the Lord and his goodneſs* (1); and while it encourages him, guilty as he is, to repoſe himſelf upon it as his hope, it awakens a generous kind of confuſion at the thought of ever having offended him, and fills his very ſoul with indignation at the thought of repeating ſuch offences.

And once more, the regenerate man has quite different notions than before, of the *intimate acceſs which God has to the ſpirits of men*, and his important *power of opperating upon them*. The greateſt part of men indeed conſider not, as they ought, how the whole material world perpetually depends upon a Divine Agency, and is no other than one grand machine, on which the great artificer continually acts, to make it an inſtrument of mercy to his ſenſitive and intelligent creatures. But there are yet fewer, who ſeriouſly conſider, how entirely *the hearts of men are in the hand of the Lord*, and how much depends on his influences upon them. Nevertheleſs, experience teaches the renewed ſoul, that *he is the God of the ſpirit of all fleſh* (2), and he not only views, but manages them as he pleaſes. "Lord," does he ſay, "this ſpirit of mine is ſhaded with thick darkneſs, but thou canſt illuminate it; it is diſeaſed, but thou canſt cure it; it is *unſtable as water* (3), and lighter than a feather, yet thou canſt fix and eſtabliſh it; and whatever thou wouldſt have me to be, and to do, for thy glory, and mine own happineſs, thou canſt *work in me both to will and to perform* it (4): ſo that all I need, to the rectitude and felicity of my nature, is only this, that I may have more of thine inward, vital, operative preſence." It is not eaſy to conceive, what efficacy this thought has, for the transformation of the ſoul. But again,

2. New apprehenſions are connected with theſe ſentiments in the regenerate ſoul "concerning *itſelf*, and its own ſtate."

It is ſurpriſing to think, how many run through ſucceſſive years in life, without ever turning the eye of the

(1) Hoſ. iii 5. (2) Numb. xxvii. 16. (3) Gen. xlix. 4.
(4) Phil. ii. 13.

mind inward, that the ſoul may ſurvey itſelf. I ſpeak not of a philoſophical ſurvey of the faculties of the mind; which, though indeed in its place it be uſeful and entertaining, is no more neceſſary in its refinements to a well-ordered ſtate, than ſkill in anatomy is to a healthful conſtitution: but I ſpeak of thoſe views of the mind, which are in the reach of all, how low ſoever their genius, or their education may have been.

As all true happineſs is an internal thing, wherever God intends to produce it in the heart of a revolted, corrupted creature (and ſuch, alas! we all naturally are) he leads it into a view of itſelf; and ſhews it (if I may be allowed the expreſſion) a mixture of *grandeur* and *miſery*, that lies within; which yet the greateſt part of mankind live and die without ever obſerving. "I am here," does the awakened creature ſay, "an intelligent being; far ſuperior to this well-wrought frame of fleſh and blood, which God has given me for a little while to command, and which I muſt quickly drop in the duſt: I am made capable of determining my own choice, of directing my own actions, of judging concerning the importance of ends, and the propriety of means in ſubſerviency to them: and while I ſee a vaſt variety of creatures in different forms beneath me, I ſee no rank of creatures above me nothing nobler than man, here on earth, where I dwell. Yet I ſee man, in the midſt of his glory, a feeble, dependent, mortal creature, who cannot poſſibly be his own end, nor can of himſelf alone, by any means command or enſure his own happineſs.—Every thing tells me, that he is the creature of God; and that it is the greateſt honour and felicity, to know, and practically to acknowledge himſelf to be ſo: every thing tells me, that it is moſt reaſonable, that God, who is the great original of man, ſhould alſo be the end of his being; but have I made him the end of mine? My ſoul, thou art conſcious to thyſelf, thou haſt lived in many inſtances *without him in the world* (1).—He has given thee, even in the ſyſtem of thine own nature, and of the viſible beings that are round about thee, compared with his providential interpoſition in the management of them,

(1) Eph. ii. 12.

the intimations of his holy and righteous will; he has expreſſed theſe dictates far more plainly in his written word: and when thou comeſt to examine them, how art thou condemned by them! When thou comeſt to think of the ſpirituality and purity of his being, and his law, how ſhameful does thy temper, and thy life appear to have been! what an infinite diſproportion is there between that, and its perfect rule!—And whom, oh my ſoul, haſt thou offended? whoſe law haſt thou broken; whoſe grace haſt thou deſpiſed? The law, the grace of that eternal God, of whom I have now been hearing; who is here preſent with me, who is even within me, and who ſees, oh my heart, (more diſtinctly than thou canſt ſee) all thy guilt, and all its aggravations. Oh Lord! *I abhor myſelf, and repent in duſt and aſhes* (1). I have talked of ſin, and of the ſentence of God againſt it, as a thing of courſe: but oh, my ſoul, it is thine own concern! The guilt, the ſtain of ſin is ſtill upon thee; the ſentence of God is pronounced againſt thee; and it muſt be reverſed, or thou art undone forever. Theſe irregular habits and diſpoſitions that prevail in thee, muſt be corrected, or they will prove thy mortal diſeaſe, and everlaſting torment.—Thou art a poor, weak, irreſolute creature; the experience of every paſt day of life, ſince I began to think of religion at all, proves it; yet thou muſt, by ſome means or other, attain to inward ſtrength and inward purity, or thou art loſt: and all theſe great capacities, and glorious faculties, will but make thy ruin ſo much the more diſtinguiſhed. Oh how weighty the care! oh how great the charge! What ſhall I do, that *thought*, that *reaſon*, that *immortality*, may not be my deſtruction? Where ſhall I find a rock, that will be firm enough for my ſupport and ſafety? where ſhall I find the means, to build the fabric of ſuch a happineſs as thine, oh my ſoul, muſt be, if ever I am happy at all?"

Thus does God teach the mind, by its inward reviews and reflections, this important leſſon of its own impotence and guilt, of its depravity and ruin; and ſo prepares it for thoſe new apprehenſions of Chriſt, which I mentioned as the third particular.

(1) Job xlii. 6.

3. The regenerate ſoul has new apprehenſions "concerning the *Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, conſidered as a Mediator in general, and as ſuch a particular Mediator as he is exhibited in the word of God."

That affecting view which the regenerate ſoul has of the majeſty, glory, power, and purity of the bleſſed God, will undoubtedly convince him how unfit he is in himſelf to appear before his awful preſence. He is ready to ſink down in the duſt at the very thought, and to ſay, "*Who is able to ſtand before ſuch a* great and *holy God*, as thou art (1)? If I were in all the original rectitude and glory of my nature, I could not do it: how much leſs, ſurrounded as I am, with ſo much guilt, with ſo much pollution! I need, as it were, *a day's-man betwixt us, who might lay his hand upon us both* (2), who ſhould tranſact affairs in my name with God, and bring the peaceful meſſages of God to me: *let* ſuch an one *ſpeak with me, and I will hear*; *but let not God ſpeak with me, leſt I die* (3)."

And when he comes to take a more near and intimate view of this Mediator which GOD has exhibited in the goſpel, the renewed ſoul is even charmed and tranſported with the view: and that JESUS, whoſe name he before pronounced with ſo much coldneſs, that the very mention of it was a kind of profanation, now is regarded by him as *the chiefeſt among ten thouſand* (4). He *beholds his glory*, as that *of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth* (5). The union of the divine and human nature in the perſon of Chriſt, though it appears indeed a myſtery, which he cannot fully explain, is nevertheleſs a glorious certainty, which in the general he moſt cordially believes. He ſees *Emmanuel, God* dwelling *with us* in human fleſh, and acquieſces in the ſight; while the rays of Divine Glory are attempered by paſſing *through the veil, that is to ſay, his fleſh* (6). He conſiders *Chriſt* as *made of God* unto him *wiſdom, and righteouſneſs, and ſanctification, and redemption* (7): and each of theſe views rejoices him to the very heart. "Ignorant as I am, I ſhall be taught and inſtructed by him, that

(1) 1 Sam. vi. 20. (2) Job ix. 33. (3) Exod. xx. 19.
(4) Cant. v. 10. (5) John i. 14. (6) Heb. x. 20.
(7) 1 Cor. i. 30.

great Prophet, whom God ſent into the world; by him, who is incarnate wiſdom, as well as incarnate love; whoſe words reſound in the goſpel, and whoſe Spirit ſeals the inſtructions of his word. Guilty as I am, my crimes ſhall be expiated; for there is *redemption in his blood;* even *the forgiveneſs of ſins* (1): there is an *everlaſting righteouſneſs* that he has introduced: and oh, how richly will it adorn my ſoul!—This pollution of mine ſhall not forever exclude me from a comfortable intercourſe with the pure Majeſty of Heaven; for Chriſt is come to be my ſanctification; and he can cleanſe me by his Spirit, and transform me into that divine, delightful image which I have loſt.—Victorious Lord, how eaſily canſt thou redeem me from that ſtate of ſervitude, in which I have been kept ſo long complaining! How eaſily, and how powerfully, canſt thou vindicate me *into the glorious liberty of the children of God* (2)!—Bleſſed Jeſus, thou art my light and my ſtrength, my hope and my joy! Thou art juſt ſuch a Saviour as my neceſſity requires; thou filleſt up all my wants, and all my wiſhes; thou art *all in all* to me! I would not be ignorant of thee for ten thouſand worlds: I would not live a day, nor an hour, without recollecting who, and what thou art, and maintaining that intercourſe with thee, which is the life of my ſoul."

4. The regenerate ſoul has alſo new apprehenſions "of the importance of *eternity*, when compared with time and all its concerns."

It is indeed a moſt pitiable thing, and awakens our aſtoniſhment, grief, and indignation, to obſerve how the things of this world preſs down immortal ſpirits, and reduce them almoſt indeed to a ſtate of brutality. Moſt deplorable it is, to ſee the power and energy of thoſe motives, which are taken merely from this earth, and its little concernments, ſo that if a man did but know what was the *favourite vanity*, he might almoſt predict, from the knowledge of circumſtances, how a man's actions would be ordered; and might almoſt be ſure that he would follow, whitherſoever this intereſt, or that pleaſure, this ambitious, or that mercenary view, called

(1) Eph. i. 7. (2) Rom. viii. 21.

him; though all the prospects for an eternal world pleaded the contrary way. Such is the *folly* and *madness* that *is in men's hearts while they live; and after that they go down to the dead* (1), and spend that immortal duration, which they have despised, in fruitless lamentations. Fatal delusion! which it is the great design of the gospel to cure.

But when a soul becomes *wise to salvation*, it is taught to *look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; because* it has now a full sense of what before it only notionally confessed, that *the things which are seen, are temporal*; *but the things that are not seen, are eternal* (2)—ETERNITY! it is impossible I should tell you how much an eye, that is enlightened by God, sees, and reads, as it were, in that one word; while one scene beyond another is still opening on the mind, till its sight and its thoughts are swallowed up: and as the creatures are as nothing with respect to God, so all the interests of time, with respect to eternity, appear *as less than nothing and vanity* (3). To be made for an everlasting existence appears in so awful a view, that while it has some pleasing hope, it *rejoices with trembling*; and every remaining fear, with relation to this great interest, seems a greater evil, than the certainty of any temporal calamity.

I might add upon this head, that the regenerate soul has not only new views of the *importance*, but likewise of the *nature* of the invisible and eternal state; and particularly of the nature of the celestial happiness. It does not consider it merely, or chiefly, as a state of corporeal enjoyment, formed to gratify and delight the senses; but as a state of perfect conformity to God, and most endearing intercourse with him; of which, as it begins already by Divine Grace to taste the pleasures, so it most ardently thirsts after them; and would be heartily willing to lose this body forever, and to bid an eternal adieu to every object capable of giving it delight; rather than it would consent to lose, in a perpetual succession of such objects, the sight of the *Father of Spirits*, and that sensibility of his love, which adds the most substantial solidity, and exalted relish, to every inferior good that can be desired from it.

(1) Eccles. ix. 3. (2) 2 Cor. iv. 18. (3) Isa. xl. 17.

5. A regenerate man has alſo new apprehenſions "of *the way* which God has marked out *to this happineſs.*"

Nothing is more common than for carnal and ignorant men to imagine, that it is a very eaſy thing to get to Heaven; and upon this preſumption, they *hew out to themſelves ciſterns, broken ciſterns, that can hold no water* (1); and often live and die with *a lie in their right hand* (2). But the renewed ſoul, having ſuch awful notions of the bleſſed God, and ſuch apprehenſions of the excellency and glory of the heavenly ſtate, as you have heard, deeply feels how abſolutely neceſſary it is, that ſomething of a very great and important *change* ſhould paſs in the mind of that ſinful creature, that ever hopes to be a partaker of it. He ſees, that it is impoſſible any external profeſſion, or external rite, ſhould ſecure ſo great an end; impoſſible, that *baptiſm* ſhould be *regeneration*, in that ſenſe in which the Scripture uſes the word, or that by this alone, though ever ſo regularly adminiſtered, a man's eternal happineſs ſhould be ſecured. He ſees, that to be aſſociated to this or that party of Chriſtians, to join with eſtabliſhed, or with ſeparate churches, and to be ever ſo zealous for their reſpective order, worſhip, and diſcipline, is a thing quite of foreign conſideration here; and that the beſt, or the worſt of men, may be, and probably are, on one ſide and on another; nay, that ignorance, pride, and bigotry may take occaſion from hence to render men *farther from the kingdom of God*, than any miſtake in judgment or practice, on theſe diſputed points, could have ſet them.

No, my brethren, when a man's eyes are enlightened by God's renewing Spirit, he ſees and feels that, in the language of Scripture, he muſt be *created* anew *in Chriſt Jeſus* (3): he ſees, that *holineſs* is a character *without which no man ſhall ſee the Lord* (4); and he is perhaps little anxious, whether *this*, or the *faith* that produces it, ſhall be called a condition or a qualification, or an inſtrument, while he ſees he muſt periſh without it: he ſees, that as it is abſolutely neceſſary, ſo it is very extenſive, *as the*

(1) Jer. ii. 13. (2) Iſa. xliv. 20. (3) Eph. ii. 10.
(4) Heb. xii. 14.

commandment, which is its rule, *is exceeding broad* (1): he ſees, that it muſt not only effectually regulate the actions of his life, but control all the ſentiments of his heart: nay, he ſees, it muſt not only be ſubmitted to as a neceſſary, but be choſen as a moſt amiable thing: and, accordingly, he does chooſe it as ſuch.—The unregenerate ſoul, when he hears of repentance and reformation, though he underſtands not half that it means, nor is aware of what will, in fact, be the greateſt difficulty of it, looks upon it at beſt as a naufeous medicine, which he muſt take, or die: but the regenerate man finds his heart ſo wonderfully and ſo happily changed, that he regards it for itſelf, as the food, the health, and the life of his ſoul; as that which neceſſarily brings its own pleaſures, and in a conſiderable degree, its own reward along with it; ſo that now, as David beautifully expreſſes it, *He openeth his mouth, and panteth; becauſe he longs for God's commandments* (2).

And I will add once more, the good man is alſo made ſenſible of the place which faith and holineſs hold, in the ſcheme which God has laid, for our juſtification before him, and our acceptance with him. I do not ſay that *all Chriſtians* conceive of this with equal perſpicuity, or expreſs their conceptions with equal exactneſs: the moſt candid allowance ſhould here be made for the different ideas they fix to the ſame phraſes, as they have been uſed to look upon them with veneration, or with ſuſpicion. But this I will venture to ſay, becauſe I am perſuaded the Scripture will bear me out in it, "that the confidence of a regenerate ſoul is not fixed on his own holineſs, or faith, as the meritorious cauſe of his acceptance with God." He is deeply and cordially ſenſible, that *he is made accepted in the Beloved* (3); and ſeeing nothing but guilt, and weakneſs, and ruin in himſelf, he aſcribes to the bleſſed Jeſus, and to the riches of God's free grace in him, his righteouſneſs, his ſtrength, and his ſalvation. And where a man is thus perſuaded, I think he muſt, in effect, believe, even though he might ſcruple in words expreſsly to own it, "that Chriſt as our great ſurety having perfectly obeyed the law of God

(1) Pſal. cxix. 96. (2) Verſe 131. (3) Eph. i. 6.

himſelf, and by his blood having fully ſatisfied the Divine Juſtice for the breach of it, we, on our believing in him by a vital faith, are juſtified before God by the imputation of his perfect righteouſneſs." This latter way of ſtating it, when rightly explained, appears juſt equivalent to the former; and it is a manner of conceiving and expreſſing it, which, when rightly underſtood, ſeems extremely ſuitable to that deep humility, and poverty of ſpirit, to which the renewed ſoul is brought, when, *like a new-born babe, it deſires the ſincere milk of the word, that it may grow thereby* (1). But as the mind, at ſuch a time, finds little inclination to contend about words and phraſes, it would be much leſs proper for me, to enter into any controverſy about them here.

Let it ſuffice for the preſent, that I have given you this plain repreſentation of that change, which is wrought in a man's apprehenſions, when he is made a new creature. When *old things are paſſed away*, he has *new apprehenſions* of *God*, of *himſelf*, of *Chriſt*, of *eternity*, and of *the way* to obtain the *happineſs* of it: and as at this happy time *all things are become new*, there are, "new affections, new reſolutions, new labours, new enjoyments, and new hopes," which are the reſult of the change already deſcribed. But it will be much more difficult to reduce what I have to offer on theſe heads, within the bounds of the next Diſcourſe, than proper to attempt any of them in this. Go home, my friends, and try yourſelves by what you have already heard; and be aſſured, that if you are *condemned* by this part of the deſcription, it is impoſſible you ſhould be *approved* by any that will follow; ſince they have all their foundation in this.

(1) 1 Pet. ii. 2.

SERMON III.

OF THE NATURE OF REGENERATION, WITH RESPECT TO THE CHANGE IT PRODUCES IN MEN'S AFFECTIONS, RESOLUTIONS, LABOURS, ENJOYMENTS, AND HOPES.

2 COR. V. 17.

If any man be in Chriſt, he is a new creature; old things are paſſed away, behold, all things are become new.

AMONG the various ſubjects, which exerciſe the thoughts and tongues of men, few are more talked of than *Religion*. But it is melancholy to think how little it is underſtood; and how much it is miſtaken and miſrepreſented in the world. The text before us gives us a very inſtructive view of it; ſuch a view, that I am ſure, an experimental knowledge of its ſenſe would be infinitely preferable to the moſt critical and exact knowledge of all the moſt curious paſſages, both of the Old Teſtament, and the New. From it, you know, I have begun to deſcribe that great change, which the word of God teaches us to repreſent under the notion of *regeneration*, or, according to the language of St. Paul, in this paſſage of his writings, by a *new creation*. I know I am explaining it before many, who have been much longer acquainted with it than myſelf; and it becomes me to believe, before many that have attained much higher advancements in it: but I fear alſo at the ſame time, I ſpeak of it before many, who are yet ſtrangers to it; and I am labouring, by the plaineſt ad-

dreſſes that I can, to give them at leaſt ſome juſt ideas of it. Oh, that to all the deſcriptions that either have, or ſhall be given, God may, by his grace, add that underſtanding which ariſes from feeling correſpondent impreſſions on the mind!

I have already endeavoured to illuſtrate thoſe new apprehenſions, which ariſe in the regenerate mind; apprehenſions of the bleſſed God, of itſelf, of Chriſt, of the eternal world, and of the way to obtain the happineſs of it. It now remains, that I conſider thoſe "new affections, reſolutions, labours, enjoyments, and hopes," which reſult from them. I obſerve, therefore,

II. That theſe *new apprehenſions* will be attended with *new* AFFECTIONS.

I readily acknowledge, that the degree in which the affections operate, may, and will be different, in different perſons, according to their natural conſtitution: but as in ſome degree or another, they make an eſſential part of our frame, it is impoſſible but they muſt be impreſſed with a matter of ſuch infinite importance, as religion will appear. And the apprehenſions deſcribed above, muſt awaken the exerciſe of correſpondent affections, and direct them to objects very different from thoſe by which they were before excited, and on which they were fixed. And here now,

1. This may be eſpecially illuſtrated in *love*.

Love is indeed the ruling paſſion of the mind, and has all the reſt in an avowed and real ſubjection to it. And here lies the very root of human miſery in our fallen and degenerate ſtate: we are naturally *lovers of ourſelves* in a very irregular degree; *lovers of pleaſures, more than lovers of God* (1). But, on the contrary, *the firſt and great commandment of the law* is written in the breaſt of every regenerate man: *thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy ſoul, and with all thy mind* (2). It is true indeed, that if his ſoul were perfectly delivered into this mould, and his attainments in Divine love were complete, there would be an end of all ſin, and almoſt of all calamity too: for what evil could aſſail or im-

(1) 2 Tim. iii. 4. (2) Mat. xxii. 37, 38.

preſs a mind entirely and unchangeably fixed upon God? Yet that the love of God ſhould be the prevailing affection, is not merely a circumſtance, but an eſſential part of true religion. While the good man *ſees him who is inviſible* (1), as infinitely perfect in himſelf, and as the author of being and happineſs to the whole creation, he cannot but acknowledge, that he is, beyond compariſon, the moſt amiable of all objects. And though it is certain, that nothing can ſo much induce and inflame our love to God, as a well-grounded aſſurance, that he is become our God, and our Father in Chriſt; yet before the regenerate ſoul has attained to this, a ſenſe of thoſe favours which he receives from God in common with the whole human race, and more eſpecially of thoſe which are inſeparable from a Chriſtian profeſſion, together with the apprehenſion of his being acceſſible through a mediator, and reconcileable to ſinful men, will diffuſe ſome delightful ſenſe of God over the mind, which will grow ſweeter in proportion to the degree in which his own hopes brighten and ſettle, while they are growing toward the *full aſſurance of faith.*

And as the real Chriſtian *loves him that begat, he loves him alſo that is begotten of him* (2). He *loves the Lord Jeſus Chriſt in ſincerity* (3), viewing him not in a cold and inſenſible manner, as he once did, but with inflamed affections, *as the chiefeſt among ten thouſand, and altogether lovely* (4). If he *knows*, in any degree, *the grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt* (5), in becoming incarnate for the ſalvation of his people, in making himſelf a ſacrifice for their ſins, and paying his life for the ranſom of their lives; he feels himſelf *drawn* toward Jeſus, thus *lifted up on the croſs* (6); and *the love of Chriſt conſtrains him* (7) to ſuch a degree, that he longs to find out ſome acceptable method to expreſs his inward and overbearing ſenſe of it. How divided ſoever true Chriſtians may be in other reſpects, they all agree in this, in *loving* that *Jeſus whom they have not ſeen* (8).

We may further recollect on this head, that the Apoſtle, in a ſolemn manner, adjures Chriſtians *by the love of*

(1) Heb. xi. 27. (2) 1 John v. 1. (3) Eph. vi. 24.
(4) Cant. v. 10, 16. (5) 2 Cor. viii. 9. (6) John xii. 32.
(7) 2 Cor. v. 14. (8) 1 Pet. i. 8.

the Spirit (1); thereby plainly implying, that such a love to him is an important branch of their character: and it must be so in all those who regard him, as every regenerate soul does, as the author of divine light and life, and as the source of love and happiness, by whom this *love of God is shed abroad in the heart* (2), while it is *enlarged* with sacred delight to *run the way of his commandments* (3): as that *Spirit*, by whom *we are sealed to the day of redemption* (4), and who brings down the foretastes of Heaven to the heart in which he dwells, and which, by his presence, he consecrates as *the temple of God* (5).

And most natural is it, that a soul filled with these impressions and views should overflow with unutterable joy, and feeling itself thus happy in an intercourse with its God, should be enlarged in love to man: *for*, says the Apostle, *ye are taught of God to love one another* (6). Those, whom he apprehends as his brethren by regenerating grace, he knows are with him beloved of the Lord; and as he hopes to dwell with them forever in glory, he must love them so far as he knows them now. And though a narrow education, and that bigotry, which sometimes conceals itself under very honourable and pious names, may perhaps influence even a sanctified heart, so far as to entertain unkind suspicions as to those, whose religious sentiments may differ from his own, and it may be, to pass some rash censures upon them; yet as his acquaintance with them increases, and he discerns, under their different forms, the traces of their common Father, his prejudices wear off, and that sometimes by very sensible degrees; and Christians *receive one another, as Christ has received* them all (7). And where the good man cannot love others with a love of complacency and esteem, he at least beholds them with a love of compassion and pity; and remembers the relation of fellow-creatures, where he sees no reason to hope that they are fellow-heirs with him. In a word, the heart is melted down into tenderness; it is warmed with generous sentiments; it longs for opportunities of diffusing good of

(1) Rom. xv. 30. (2) Rom. v. 5. (3) Psal. cxix. 32.
(4) Eph. ix. 30. (5) 1 Cor. iii. 16. (6) 1 Thess. iv. 9.
(7) Rom. xv. 7.

all kinds, both temporal and ſpiritual, wide as its influence can reach; it beats with an ardour, which ſometimes painfully recoils upon a man's ſelf, for want of ability to help others in proportion to his deſire to do it; and that God, who knows all the inmoſt workings of his mind, hears many an importunate interceſſion for others in the hours of ſolemn devotion, and many a compaſſionate ejaculation, which he is occaſionally ſending up to Heaven from time to time, as he paſſes through ſo ſinful and ſo calamitous a world.

Theſe are the ruling affections in the heart of a good man; and though it is neither reaſonable nor poſſible, that he ſhould entirely diveſt himſelf of ſelf-love, yet he endeavours to regulate it ſo, that it may not interfere with the more important conſideration of general good. Self has the loweſt place in his regards, nor does he limit his affection to a party; but aiming at extenſive uſefulneſs, he guards againſt thoſe immoderate attachments to particular friendſhips, and thoſe extravagant ſallies of perſonal fondneſs, which are often no more than ſelf-love under a ſpecious diſguiſe; which at once alienate the heart from God, and contract the ſocial affections within very narrow, and thoſe very irregular bounds; and ſo prove almoſt as fatal to the health of the mind, as an exceſſive flow of blood into one part would be to that of the body.

I have enlarged ſo copiouſly on this change in the leading affection of the mind, that I muſt touch in a more tranſient manner on the reſt. I add, therefore,

2. That a regenerate ſoul has *new averſions*.

He once *hated knowledge, and did not chooſe the fear of the Lord* (1). He *hated the light* (2), which diſcloſed to the aching eye of his conſcience the beloved and indulged irregularities of his heart. He hated every thing that laid an embargo upon his luſts; and was ready to count thoſe for his enemies that plainly admoniſhed him, and ſecretly to diſlike thoſe whoſe conduct even ſilently reproved him. But now all theſe things are amiable to him; and thoſe are eſteemed his moſt valuable friends, whoſe example may be moſt edifying, whoſe inſtructions

(1) Prov. i. 29. (2) John iii. 20.

may be moſt uſeful, and whoſe admonitions may be moſt faithful. For he now *hates every falſe way* (1); yea, and every *vain thought* too (2). He looks upon every irregular deſire as an enemy, which he longs utterly to ſubdue; and eſpecially ſtrives againſt *that ſin which does moſt eaſily beſet him*, and abhors it more than he ever delighted in it. And though he rather pities than hates the perſons of the moſt wretched and miſchievous tranſgreſſors, yet he can no longer continue an endearing friendſhip with thoſe, who were once his ſeducers to ſin, and his companions in it. In this ſenſe, like David, he *hates the congregation of evil-doers, and will not ſit with the wicked* (3); and if they will not be wrought upon by his compaſſionate endeavours to reclaim them, he will ſoon break off the infectious intercourſe, and ſay, *Depart from me, ye evil-doers, for* I determine that *I will keep the commandments of my God* (4).

3. The regenerate man has alſo *new deſires*.

There was a time, when *ſinful paſſions*, as the Apoſtle expreſſes it, *did work in his members to bring forth fruit unto death* (5). He was *fulfilling the deſires of the fleſh, and of the mind* (6), and *making proviſion to fulfil the luſts* of both (7). But now he earneſtly deſires a conformity to God, as his higheſt happineſs; and can look up to him, and ſay, "*Oh, Lord, the deſire of my ſoul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee* (8); to maintain ſuch a ſenſe of thy preſence at all times, as may influence my heart to think, my lips to ſpeak, and my hands to act, in a manner ſuitable to that remembrance, and agreeable to thy wiſe and holy will." He now *hungers and thirſts after righteouſneſs* (9); feels as real an appetite after more advanced degrees of piety and holineſs, as he ever felt toward the gratification of his ſenſes; and eſteems the proper methods of attaining theſe advanced degrees, even *more than his neceſſary food* (10). Inſtead of deſiring to run through a long courſe of animal enjoyments, he deſires to get above them; longs to be a pure and triumphant ſpirit in

(1) Pſal. cxix. 104. (2) Verſe 113. (3) Pſal. xxvi. 5.
(4) Pſal. cxix. 115. (5) Rom. vii. 5. (6) Eph. ii. 3.
(7) Rom. xiii. 14. (8) Iſa. xxvi. 8. (9) Mat. v. 6.
(10) Job xxiii. 12.

the refined regions of immortality; and *is willing rather to be abſent from the body, and to be preſent with the Lord* (1).

But I wave the further illuſtration of this, till I come to conſider the new hopes which inſpire him. I therefore add, as a neceſſary conſequence of theſe new deſires,

4. That the regenerate man has *new fears*.

Pain and ſorrow, diſappointment and affliction, he naturally feared; and the forebodings of his own mind would ſometimes awaken the fears of future puniſhment, according to the righteous judgment of an offended God: but now he fears not merely puniſhment, but guilt; fears the remonſtrance of an injured conſcience; for he reverences conſcience as God's vicegerent in his boſom. He therefore fears the moſt ſecret ſins, as well as thoſe which might occaſion public diſgrace; yea, he fears, leſt by a precipitate and inconſiderate conduct he ſhould contract guilt before he is aware. He fears, leſt he ſhould inadvertently injure and grieve others, even the weakeſt and the meaneſt. He fears uſing his *liberty*, in a manner that might enſnare his brethren, or might occaſion any ſcandal to a Chriſtian profeſſion: for ſuch is the ſenſibility of his heart in this reſpect, that he would be more deeply concerned for the diſhonour brought to God, and the reproach which might be thrown on religion by any unſuitable conduct of his, than merely for that part of the ſhame that might immediately and directly fall upon himſelf. But again,

5. The regenerate man has *new joys*.

Theſe ariſe chiefly from an intercourſe with God through Jeſus Chriſt; and from a review of himſelf, as under the ſanctifying influences of his grace, and as brought into a ſtate of favour with him, in proportion to the degree in which he can diſcern himſelf in this character and ſtate.

You know David, ſpeaking of God, calls him *his exceeding joy* (2); and declares *the gladneſs he had put into his heart*, by *lifting up the light of his countenance upon him*, to be far beyond what *they* could have, *whoſe corn and wine increaſed* (3). And the Apoſtle Paul ſpeaks of Chriſtians,

(1) 2 Cor. v. 8. (2) Pſal. xliii. 4. (3) Pſal. iv. 6, 7.

as *joying in God through Jesus Christ* (1), and as *rejoicing in Christ Jesus* (2): and Peter also describes them as those, who, *believing in him, though unseen, rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory* (3).

Perhaps there was a time, when the good man censured all pretences of this kind, now at least in these latter days of Christianity, as an empty, enthusiastic pretence; but since he has *tasted that the Lord is gracious* (4), he has that experimental knowledge of their reality and excellence, which he can confidently oppose to all the most artful and sophistical cavils; and could as soon doubt, whether the sun enlightens his eyes, and warms his body, as he could question, whether God has ways of manifesting himself to souls when it is felt with unutterable delight: and when thus entertained, he can adopt David's words, and say, that *his soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness*, so that *with joyful lips he praises God* (5), when *his meditation of him* is thus *sweet* (6), and *God says unto his soul, I am thy salvation* (7).

The survey of the Lord Jesus Christ gives him also unutterable joy; while he reflects on that ample provision, which God has made by him, for the supply of all his necessities; and that firm security which is given to his soul by a believing union with Christ; whereby his life is connected with that of his Saviour. In his constant presence, in his faithful care, he can *boast all the day long* (8); and that friendship, which establishes a community of interests between him and his Lord, engages him to rejoice in that salvation and happiness, to which he is advanced *at the right hand of God*, and gives him, by joyful sympathy, his part with Christ in glory, before he personally arrives at the full possession of it.

I add, that he also rejoices in the consciousness of God's gracious work upon his own soul, so far as he can discern the traces of it there. He delights to feel himself, as it were, cured of the mortal disease with which he once saw himself infected; to find himself in health and vigour of mind, renewed to a conformity with the Divine Image. He delights to look inward, and see that transf-

(1) Rom. v. 11. (2) Phil. iii. 3. (3) 1 Pet. i. 8.
(4) 1 Pet. ii. 3. (5) Psal. lxiii. 5. (6) Psal. civ. 34.
(7) Psal. xxxv. 3. (8) Psal xliv. 8.

formation of ſoul, which has made the *wilderneſs like the garden of the Lord* (1), ſo that *inſtead of the thorn there ſhall come up the fir-tree, and inſtead of the briar, the myrtle* (2). Thus the good man is *ſatisfied from himſelf* (3); and though he humbly refers the ultimate glory of all to that God, by whoſe *grace he is what he is* (4), he enters with pleaſure into his own mind, and reckons it a part of gratitude to his great Benefactor, to enjoy with as high a reliſh as he can, the preſent workings of divine grace within him, as well as the pleaſing proſpect of what it will farther do.

But this head has ſo near a reſemblance to ſome that are to follow, that were I to enlarge upon it, as I eaſily might, I ſhould leave room for nothing different to be ſaid upon them. I will only add,

6. That as the counter-part of this, *new ſorrows* will ariſe in the mind of a regenerate man.

Theſe are particularly ſuch as ſpring—from the *withdrawings of God's preſence*—from the *remainder of ſin in the ſoul*—and from the *prevalence of it in the world about him.*

The regenerate man will mourn, "when the reviving manifeſtations of God's preſence are withdrawn from his ſoul." It ſeems very abſurd to interpret the numberleſs paſſages in the ſacred writers, in which they complain of the *hidings of God's face from them*, as if they merely referred to the want of temporal enjoyments, or to the preſſure of temporal calamities. If *the light of God's countenance*, which they ſo expreſsly oppoſe to temporal bleſſings, ſignify a ſpiritual enjoyment, the want of it muſt relate to ſpiritual deſertion. And I believe there are few Chriſtians in the world, who are entirely unacquainted with this. They have moſt of them their ſeaſons, when they *walk in darkneſs, and ſee* little or *no light* (5): and this not only when anxious fears ariſe with relation to their own ſpiritual ſtate; but at ſome other times, when, though they can in the main call God *their father*, yet he ſeems, as it were, *to ſtand afar off*, and to continue them at a diſtance, which wears the face of unkindneſs, eſpecially under temptations and other afflic-

(1) Iſa. li. 3. (2) Iſa. lv. 13. (3) Prov. xiv. 14.
(4) 1 Cor. xv. 10. (5) Iſa. l. 10.

tions, in which they loſe their lively ſenſe of God's preſence, and that endearing freedom of converſe with him, which, through the influence of *the ſpirit of adoption* on their ſouls, they have ſometimes known. If this be myſterious and unintelligible to ſome of you, I am heartily ſorry for it; but I do not remember that I was ever intimately acquainted with any one, who ſeemed to me a real Chriſtian, that has not, upon mentioning the caſe, acknowledged, that he has felt ſomething of it: at leaſt I will boldly venture to ſay this, that if you are truly regenerate, and do not know what I mean by it, it is becauſe you have hitherto been kept in a continual flow of holy joy, or at leaſt in a calm and cheerful perſuaſion of your intereſt in the Divine favour: and even ſuch may ſee the day, when *ſtrong* as their *mountain* ſeems to *ſtand, God may hide his face to their trouble* (1): or, however, they will infer from what they now feel, that it muſt be a mournful caſe whenever it occurs; and that ſorrow, in ſuch a circumſtance, will ſoon ſtrike on a truly ſanctified heart, and wound it very deep.

The ſorrow of a good man alſo ariſes "from the remainder of ſin in his ſoul." Though he is *upright before God*, and proves it by *keeping himſelf from his iniquity* (2); yet he cries out, *Who can underſtand his errors* (3)? *Who can ſay, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my ſin* (4)? A ſenſe of the ſinfulneſs of his nature humbles him in the duſt; and the firſt riſings of irregular inclinations and paſſions give him a tender pain, with which a carnal heart is unacquainted, even when ſin is domineering within him.

And once more, "The prevalence of ſin in the world around him," is a grief to one that is born of God. It pierces him to the heart to ſee men diſhonouring God, and ruining themſelves: he *beholds tranſgreſſors*, as David well expreſſes it, with a mixture of *indignation* and *ſorrow* (5); and when he ſeriouſly conſiders how common, and yet how ſad a caſe it is, he can perhaps borrow the words of the ſame prophet, ſo far as to ſay, that *rivers of waters run down his eyes, becauſe men keep not the law of*

(1) Pſal. xxx. 7. (2) Pſal. xviii. 23. (3) Pſal. xix. 12.
(4) Prov. xx. 9. (5) Pſal. cxxxix. 21.

God (1).—Now, as theſe are ſorrows that ſeldom do at all affect the heart of an unregenerate man, I thought it the more proper to mention them, to aſſiſt you in your inquiries into your own ſtate.

Such are the affections of love and averſion, of deſire and fear, of joy and ſorrow, which fill the breaſt of the regenerate man, and naturally ariſe from thoſe new apprehenſions which are deſcribed under the former head. I add,

III. That he has alſo *new* RESOLUTIONS.

You will eaſily apprehend I ſpeak of thoſe that are formed for the ſervice of God, and againſt ſin. I readily acknowledge, that there are often, in unregenerate men, ſome reſolutions of this kind, and perhaps thoſe very warm, and for the preſent very ſincere; yet there is conſiderable difference between them and thoſe we are now to repreſent; as the reſolutions of the truly good man are more *univerſal*, more *immediate*, and more *humble*.

1. The *reſolutions* which he now forms, are more *univerſal* than they ever were before.

He does not now reſolve againſt this or that ſin, but againſt all; againſt ſin, as ſin; as oppoſite to the holineſs of God, and deſtructive of the honour and happineſs of the rational creation. He does not ſay with Naaman, concerning this or that more convenient iniquity, *the Lord pardon thy ſervant in this thing* (2); nor does he reſolve to excuſe himſelf in an indulgence, even to *that ſin which does moſt eaſily beſet him* (3): but rather, in his general determination againſt ſin, and in thoſe ſolemn engagements with which ſuch determinations may be attended, he fixes eſpecially upon thoſe ſins which he might before have been moſt ready to except.

2. The *reſolutions* of the regenerate man are more *immediate*.

It very frequently happens, that while others are under awakening impreſſions, as they ſee a neceſſity for parting with their ſins, and engaging in what they may call a religious life, they reſolve upon it: but then they think it may be delayed a little longer; perhaps a few

(1) Pſal. cxix. 136. (2) 2 Kings v. 18. (3) Heb. xii. 1.

years, or at leaſt a few weeks or days; or they, perhaps, refer it to ſome remarkable period which is approaching, which they flatter themſelves they ſhall make yet more remarkable, as the era of their reformation: but, in the mean time, they will take their farewel of their luſts by a few more indulgences; and thus they delude themſelves, and rivet on their chains faſter than before. But the good man, with David, *makes haſte, and delays not to keep the commandments of God* (1). He is like the prodigal, who, as ſoon as ever he ſaid, *I will ariſe and go to my father*, immediately *aroſe and came to him* (2). He reckons *the time* he has already ſpent in the ſervice of ſin *may ſuffice* (3), and that indeed it is far more than enough: he wiſhes he could call back that which is paſt; but he determines, that he will not take one ſtep further in this unhappy path. He fully purpoſes, that he will never once more deliberately and preſumptuouſly offend God, in any matter, great or ſmall; if any thing can be called ſmall, which is a deliberate and apprehended offence: and he determines, that from this moment he will *yield himſelf to God, as alive from the dead*, and employ *his members as inſtruments of righteouſneſs* (4). But then,

3. His *reſolutions* are more *modeſt* and *humble* than they have ever been before.

And this indeed is the great circumſtance that renders them more effectual.—When an awakened ſinner feels himſelf moſt enſlaved to his vices, he pleaſes himſelf with this thought, that there is a ſecret kind of ſpring in his mind, which, when he pleaſes to exert, he can break through all at once, and commence, whenever that unhappy neceſſity comes upon him, a very religious man in a moment. And when conſcience preſſes him with the memory of paſt guilt, and the repreſentation of *future danger*, he cuts off theſe remonſtrances with a haſty reſolve, "I will do ſo no more;" but then, perhaps, the effect of this may not laſt a day; though poſſibly it may, at other times, continue a few weeks or months, where the groſſer acts of ſin are concerned: and indeed his reſolutions ſeldom reach farther than theſe; for the neceſſity of a ſanctified heart is a myſtery which he has never

(1) Pſal. cxix. 60.
(2) Luke xv. 18, 20.
(3) 1 Pet. v. 3.
(4) Rom. vi. 13.

yet learned. But a truly regenerate man has learned wiſdom from this experience of his own, and the obſervation of other men's frailty. He feels his own weakneſs, and is ſo thoroughly aware of the treachery of his own heart, that he is almoſt afraid to expreſs in words the purpoſe which his very ſoul is forming: he is almoſt afraid to turn that purpoſe into a vow before God, leſt the breach of that vow ſhould increaſe his guilt: but this he can ſay, with repenting Ephraim, *Lord, turn thou me, and I ſhall be turned* (1); and with David, *Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my foot-ſteps may not ſlip* (2). "I am exceeding frail; but, Lord, *be thou ſurety for thy ſervant for good* (3), and then I ſhall be ſafe! Do thou reſcue me from temptations, and I ſhall be delivered! Do thou fill my heart with holy ſentiments, and I will breathe them out before thee! Do thou excite and maintain a zeal for thy ſervice, and then I will exert myſelf in it!" And when once a man is come to ſuch a diſtruſt of himſelf; when, *like a little child*, he ſtretches out his hand to be led by his heavenly Father, and truſts in his guardian care alone for his ſecurity and comfort; then *out of weakneſs he is made ſtrong* (4), and goes on ſafe though perhaps trembling; and ſees thoſe that made the loudeſt boaſts, and placed the greateſt confidence in themſelves, *falling on the right hand and on the left*, and all their bravery melting away like ſnow before the ſun.

IV. The regenerate man has *new* LABOURS and EMPLOYMENTS.

Not that his former employment in ſecular life is laid aſide: it would ordinarily be a very dangerous ſnare for a man to imagine that God requires this. On the contrary, the Apoſtle gives it in charge to Chriſtian converts, that *in what calling ſoever a man is found, when he is called* into the profeſſion of the Goſpel, *he ſhould therein abide with God* (5). But when he becomes a real Chriſtian he proſecutes this calling, whatever it be, with a new ſpirit and temper, from new principles, and to new purpoſes. While his hands are labouring in the world, his heart is often riſing to God; he conſecrates his work to the Di-

(1) Jer. xxxi. 18. (2) Pſal. xvii. 5. (3) Pſal. cxix. 122.
(4) Heb. xi. 34. (5) 1 Cor. vii. 20, 24.

vine honour, and to the credit of religion; and desires, that *his merchandise* and his gain *may*, in this sense, *be holiness to the Lord* (1), by employing it to support the family which Providence has committed to his charge (2), and to relieve the poor which Christ recommends to his pity (3); and as he depends upon God to give him wisdom and success in the conduct of his affairs, he ascribes the glory of that success to him; not *sacrificing to his own net, nor burning incense to his own drag* (4).

And I will further add, that regeneration introduces a set of new labours, added to the former, with which the man was before utterly unacquainted.—We may consider, as the principal and chief of these, the great labour of purifying the heart, of conquering sinful inclinations and affections, and of approaching God by a more intimate access and more endeared converse. Now they that imagine this to be an easy matter, know little of the human heart, little of the spirituality of God's nature, and his law. Give me leave to say, that the labours of the body, in cultivating the earth, are much more easily performed than this spiritual husbandry. To weed a soil so luxuriant in evil productions, and to raise a plentiful harvest of holy affections and actions in a soil so barren of good; to regulate appetites and passions so exorbitant as those of the human heart naturally are, and to awaken in it suitable affections; to be abundant in the fruits of righteousness, and to converse with God in the exercise of devotion: these are no little things; nor will a little resolution, watchfulness, and activity suffice, in order to the discharge of such a business. It is comparatively easy to go through the forms of prayer and praise, whatever they are: to read, or from present conception to utter, a few words before God: but to unite the heart in God's service, to wrestle with him for a blessing, to pour out the heart before him, to speak to him as searching the very heart; so that he should say, "This is prayer:" this, my brethren, is a work indeed; and he that is conscientious in the discharge of it will find, that it is not to be dispatched in a few hasty moments, nor without serious reflection, and a resolute watch maintained over the spirit.

(1) Isa. xxiii. 18. (2) 1 Tim. v. 8. (3) Acts xx. 35.
(4) Hab. i. 16.

New labours alſo ariſe to the regenerate ſoul, in conſequence of the concern it has to promote religion in the world.—Being poſſeſſed, as I formerly ſhewed you the heart of the good man is, with an unfeigned love to his fellow-creatures, and knowing of how great importance religion is to the happineſs of men, he pleads earneſtly with God for the propagation and ſucceſs of the Goſpel: and he endeavours, according to his ability and opportunity, to promote it; to promote *pure and undefiled religion* in his family and his neighbourhood, even in all around him. And this requires obſervation and application, that this attempt may be prudently conducted, and great reſolution, in order to its being rendered effectual: it requires great diligence in watching over ourſelves, leſt our examples prove inconſiſtent with our precepts; and no ſmall degree of courage, conſidering how averſe the generality of mankind are to admonitions and reproofs; in conſequence of which, a perſon can hardly act the part of a faithful friend, without expoſing himſelf to the hazard of being accounted an enemy.

Such are the new labours of the real Chriſtian: let any man try to perform them, and he will not find them light; but to encourage the attempt, let me further add,

V. That the regenerate ſoul has its *new* ENTERTAINMENTS too.

He has *pleaſures*, which *a ſtranger intermeddles not with* (1). and which *the world* can neither *give*, nor *take away* (2): pleaſures, which a thouſand times overbalance the moſt painful labours, and the moſt painful ſufferings too; and which, ſweetly mingling themſelves with the various circumſtances of life, through which the Chriſtian paſſes, do, as it were, gild all the ſcene, and make all the fatigues and ſelf-denial of his life far more agreeable, than any of thoſe delights the worldling, or the ſenſualiſt, can find in the midſt of his unbounded and ſtudied indulgences.—But here I ſhall be in great danger of repeating what I ſaid under a former head, when I was ſpeaking of the new joys which the Chriſtian feels, in conſequence

(1) Prov. xiv. 10. (2) John xvi. 22.

of the great change that regeneration makes in his ſoul: and therefore, omiting what I then obſerved, concerning the pleaſure of communion with God through Chriſt, and of perceiving a work of Divine grace upon the ſoul, I ſhall now touch upon ſome other ſources of exalted entertainment, which did not ſo directly fall under that head.

1. The Chriſtian finds *new pleaſures* in the *word of God.*

You know with what reliſh the ſaints of old ſpake of it. *Thy words were found,* ſays the Prophet, *and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart* (1). *Thy ſtatutes,* ſays the Pſalmiſt, *are more to be deſired than gold, yea, than much fine gold; they are ſweeter alſo than honey, and the honey-comb* (2).—The apoſtle Peter beautifully repreſents this, when he exhorts the ſaints to whom he wrote, *as new-born babes* to *deſire the ſincere milk of the word, that they might grow thereby* (3). And the infant that ſmiles on the breaſt, and with ſuch eagerneſs and delight draws its nouriſhment from it, ſeems an amiable image of the humble Chriſtian, who *receives the kingdom of God,* and the word of that kingdom, *as a little child* (4); who *lays up* Scripture *in his heart* (5), and draws forth the ſweetneſs of it, with a firm perſuaſion, that it is indeed the word of God, and was appointed by him for the food of his ſoul.

2. He alſo finds *new pleaſures* in the *ordinances of Divine worſhip.*

He is *glad when it is ſaid unto him, Let us go into the houſe of the Lord* (6). He indeed eſteems *the tabernacles of the Lord,* as *amiable,* and regards *a day in his courts* as *better than a thouſand* elſewhere (7). And this pleaſure ariſes, not merely from any thing peculiar in the adminiſtrations of this or that man who officiates in holy things; but from the nature of the exerciſe in general, and from a regard to the Divine authority of thoſe inſtitutions which are there obſerved. He feels a ſacred delight in an intercourſe

(1) Jer. xv. 16. (2) Pſal. xix. 10. (3) 1 Pet. ii. 2.
(4) Mark x. 15. (5) Job xxii. 22. (6) Pſal. cxxii. 1.
(7) Pſal. lxxxiv. 1, 10.

with God in thoſe ſolemnities; in compariſon of which, all the graces of compoſition and delivery appear as little as the harmony of inſtruments, or the perfume of incenſe, to one of the Old Teſtament ſaints, when compared with *the light of God's countenance*, which was *lifted up* on the pious worſhipper under the Moſaic forms, *when in his temple every one ſpake of his glory* (1). *One thing has he deſired of the Lord, and that he ſeeks after, that he may dwell in the houſe of the Lord all the days of his life;* not to amuſe his vain imagination, not to gratify his ear, not to indulge his curioſity with uſeleſs inquiries, nor merely to exerciſe his underſtanding with ſublime ſpeculations; but *to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple* (2).

3. He likewiſe finds a *new entertainment* in the *converſation of Chriſtian friends*.

He now knows what it is to have *fellowſhip with thoſe* whoſe *communion is with the Father, and with his Son Jeſus Chriſt* (3). His *delight is* now *in them* that are truly *the excellent of the earth* (4). He delights to diſmiſs the uſual topics of modern converſation, that ſome religious ſubject may be aſſumed, not as matter of diſpute, but as matter of devout recollection; and loves to hear the plaineſt Chriſtian expreſs his experimental ſenſe of divine things. Thoſe ſentiments of piety and love, which come warm from a gracious heart, are always pleaſing to him; and thoſe appear the deareſt bands of friendſhip, which may draw him nearer to his heavenly Father, and unite his ſoul in ties of more ardent love to his Redeemer. A ſociety of ſuch friends is indeed a kind of anticipation of heaven; and to chooſe, and delight in ſuch, is no contemptible token, that the ſoul has attained to ſome conſiderable degree of preparation for it. I only add,

VI. That in conſequence of all this, the regenerate ſoul has *new* HOPES and PROSPECTS.

Men might be very much aſſiſted in judging of their true ſtate, if they would ſeriouſly reflect what it is they hope and wiſh for. What are thoſe expectations and de-

(1) Pſal. xxix. 9. (2) Pſal. xxvii. 4. (3) 1 John i. 3.
(4) Pſal. xvi. 3.

ſires that moſt ſtrongly impreſs their minds? A vain mortal, untaught and unchanged by Divine grace, is always dreſſing up to himſelf ſome empty phantom of earthly happineſs, which he looks after and purſues; and fooliſhly imagines, "Could I graſp it, and keep it, I ſhould be happy." But Divine grace teaches the real Chriſtian to give up theſe empty ſchemes: "God," does he ſay, "never intended this world for my happineſs: he will make it tolerable to me; he will give me ſo much of it as he ſees conſiſtent with my higheſt intereſt; he will enable me to derive inſtruction, and it may be conſolation, out of its diſappointments and diſtreſſes: but he reſerves my inheritance for the eternal world. I am *begotten again to a lively hope by the reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt from the dead*, even *to* the hope of *an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away* (1): and though it be, for the preſent, *reſerved in heaven*, it is ſo ſafe, and ſo great, that it is well worth my waiting for, though ever ſo long; *for the things that are not ſeen, are eternal* (2)." And this indeed is the true character of a good man. Eternity fills his thoughts; and growing ſenſible, in another manner than he ever was before, of the importance of it, he pants after the enjoyment of eternal happineſs. Aſſign any limited duration to his enjoyment of God in the regions of glory, and you would overwhelm him with diſappointment: talk of hundreds, of thouſands, of millions of years, the diſappointment is almoſt equal: periods like theſe ſeem ſcarce diſtinguiſhable from each other, when compared with an eternal hope. To eternity his deſires and expectations are raiſed; and he can be contented with nothing leſs than eternity; perfect holineſs, and perfect happineſs forever and ever, without any mixture of ſin, or any alloy of ſorrow; this he firmly expects, this he ardently breathes after; a felicity which an immortal ſoul ſhall never outlive, and which an eternal God ſhall never ceaſe to communicate. This heavenly country he ſeeks; he conſiders himſelf as a citizen of it, and endeavours to maintain *his converſation* there (3); to carry on, as it were, a daily trade for heaven, and to *lay up a treaſure*

(1) 1 Pet. i. 3, 4. (2) 2 Cor. iv. 18. (3) Phil. iii. 20.

there (1); in which he may be rich and great, when all the pomp of this earth is paſſed away as a dream, and all its moſt precious metals and gems are melted down and conſumed among its vileſt materials in the laſt univerſal burning.

This is the change, the glorious change, which regeneration makes in a man's character and views: and who ſhall dare to ſpeak, or to think contemptibly of it? Were we indeed to repreſent it as a kind of charm, depending on an external ceremony, which it was the peculiar prerogative of a certain order of men to perform, and yet on which eternal life was ſuſpended; one might eaſily apprehend, that it would be brought into much ſuſpicion. Or ſhould we place it in any mechanical tranſports of animal nature, in any blind impulſe, in any ſtrong feelings, not to be deſcribed, or accounted for, or argued upon, but known by ſome inward inexplicable ſenſation to be divine; we could not wonder, if calm and prudent men were ſlow to admit the pretenſion to it, and were fearful it might end in the moſt dangerous enthuſiaſm, made impious by exceſſive appearances of piety.—But when it is delineated by ſuch fair and bright characters as thoſe that have now been drawn; when theſe Divine lineaments on the ſoul, by which it bears the image of its Maker's rectitude and ſanctity, are conſidered as its neceſſary conſequence, or rather as its very eſſence; one would imagine, that every rational creature, inſtead of cavilling at it, ſhould pay an immediate homage to it, and earneſtly deſire, and labour, and pray, to experience the change: eſpecially as it is a change ſo deſirable for itſelf; as we acknowledge health to be, though a man were not to be rewarded for being well: nor puniſhed, any farther than with the malady he contracts, for any negligence in this reſpect.

Where is there any thing can be more ornamental to our natures, than to have all the powers of the mind thus changed by grace, and our purſuits directed to ſuch objects as are worthy of the beſt attention and regard?—to have our apprehenſions of divine and ſpiritual things enlarged, and to have right conceptions of the moſt import-

(1) Mat. vi. 20.

ant matters;—to have the ſtream of our affections turned from empty vanities, to objects that are proper to excite and fix them;—to have our reſolutions ſet againſt all ſin, and a full purpoſe formed within us of an immediate reformation and return to God, with a dependence on his grace to help us *both to will and to do*;—to have our labours ſtedfaſtly applied to conquer ſin, and to promote religion in ourſelves and others;—to have our entertainments founded in a religious life, and flowing in upon us from the ſweet intercourſe we have with God in his word and ordinances, and the delightful converſation that we ſometimes have with Chriſtian friends;—and finally, to have our hopes drawn off from earthly things, and fixed upon eternity?—Where is there any thing can be more honourable to us, than thus to be *renewed after the image of him that created us* (1), and to *put on the new man, which after God is created in righteouſneſs and true holineſs* (2)?—And where is any thing that can be more deſirable, than thus to have the darkneſs of our underſtandings cured, and the diſorders rectified, that ſin had brought upon our nature? Who is there that is ſo inſenſible of his depravity, as that he would not long for ſuch a happy change? Or who is there that knows how excellent a work it is, to be *transformed by the renewing of the mind* (3), that would not, with the greateſt thankfulneſs, adore the riches of Divine grace, if it appear that he is thus become *a new creature*; that *old things are paſſed away, and behold, all things are become new?*

But I ſhall quickly ſhew you, that regeneration is not only ornamental, honourable, and deſirable, but abſolutely neceſſary, as ever we would hope to ſhare the bleſſings of God's heavenly kingdom, and to eſcape the horror of thoſe that are finally and irrevocably excluded from it. This argument will employ ſeveral ſucceeding Diſcourſes; but would diſmiſs you at preſent with an earneſt requeſt, that you would, in the mean time, renew your inquiries, as to the truth of regeneration in your own ſouls; which, after all that I have been ſaying, it will be very inexcuſable for you to neglect, as probably

(1) Col. iii. 10. (2) Eph. iv. 24. (3) Rom. xii. 2.

you will hear few diſcourſes, in the whole courſe of your lives, which centre more directly in this point, or are more induſtriouſly calculated to give you the ſafeſt and cleareſt aſſiſtance in it. May God abaſe the arrogance and preſumption of every ſelf-deceiving ſinner; and awaken the confidence and joy of the feebleſt ſoul, in whom this new creation is begun!

SERMON IV.

THE NECESSITY OF REGENERATION, ARGUED FROM THE IMMUTABLE CONSTITUTION OF GOD.

JOHN iii. 3.

Jeſus anſwered and ſaid unto him, Verily, verily, I ſay unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot ſee the kingdom of God.

WHILE the miniſters of Chriſt are diſcourſing of ſuch a ſubject, as I have before me in the courſe of theſe Lectures, and particularly in this branch of them which I am now entering upon, we may ſurely, with the utmoſt reaſon, addreſs our hearers in thoſe words of Moſes to Iſrael, in the concluſion of his dying diſcourſe: *Set your hearts unto all the words which I teſtify among you this day, which ye ſhall command your children to obſerve and do,* even *all the words of this law; for it is not a vain thing for you, becauſe it is your life* (1). That muſt undoubtedly be your life, concerning which the Lord Jeſus Chriſt himſelf, the incarnate wiſdom of God, *the faithful and true witneſs* (2), has ſaid, and ſaid it with a ſolemn repeated aſſeveration, that without it *a man cannot ſee the kingdom of God.*

The occaſion of his ſaying it deſerves our notice; though the niceties of the context muſt be waved in ſuch

(1) Deut. xxxii. 46, 47. (2) Rev. iii. 14.

a ſeries of ſermons as this. He ſaid it to a Jew of conſiderable rank, and, as it appears, one of the grand Sanhedrim, or chief council of the nation; who came not only for his own private ſatisfaction, but in the name of ſeveral of his brethren, to diſcourſe with Chriſt concerning his doctrine, at the firſt paſſover he attended at Jeruſalem, after he had entered on his public miniſtry. Our Lord would, to be ſure, be peculiarly careful what anſwer he returned to ſuch an inquiry: and this is his anſwer, *Verily, verily, I ſay unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot ſee the kingdom of God:* as if he ſhould have ſaid, "If the princes of Iſrael inquire after my character, let them know that I came to be a preacher of *regeneration;* and that the bleſſings of that kingdom which I am come to reveal and erect, are to be peculiar to renewed and ſanctified ſouls; who may, by an eaſy and natural figure, be ſaid *to be born again.*" And the figure appears very intelligible, and very inſtructive to thoſe that will ſeriouſly conſider it; and might lead us into a variety of pertinent and uſeful remarks.

You eaſily perceive, that to be born again muſt intimate a very great change; coming, as it were, into a new world, as an infant does; when after having lived a while a kind of vegetative life in the darkneſs and confinement of the womb, it is born into open day; feels the vital air ruſhing in on its lungs, and light forcing itſelf upon the awakened eyes; hears ſounds before unknown; opens its mouth to receive a yet untaſted food, and every day becomes acquainted with new objects, and exerts new powers, till it grows up to the maturity of a perfect man. Such, and in ſome reſpects greater and nobler than this, is the change which regeneration makes in a heart, before unacquainted with religion: as you may have ſeen at large from the preceding diſcourſes.

But I might further obſerve, that the phraſe in the text may alſo expreſs the humbling nature of this change, as well as the greatneſs of it. Eraſmus gives this turn to the words; and it is ſo edifying, that I ſhould have mentioned it at leaſt, though I had not thought it ſo juſt, as it appears. *To be born again,* muſt ſignify *to become as a little child* (1); and our Lord expreſsly and frequently

(1) Mat. xviii. 3.

assures us, that without this *we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven* (1). He has pronounced the very first of his blessings on *poverty of spirit* (2); and where this is wanting, the soul will never be entitled to the rest. A mild and humble, a docile and tractable temper, a freedom from avarice and ambition, and an indifference to those great toys of which men are generally so fond, are all essential parts of the Christian character; and they have all, in one view or another, been touched upon in the preceding discourses. Let it be forgiven however, if considering the importance of the case, you are told again, that *in malice ye must be children* (3); and that *if any man think himself wise, he must become* a child, and even a *fool, that he may be wise* indeed (4).

I might observe once more, that these words intimate the divine power, by which this great and humbling change is effected. Our first formation and birth is the work of God, and no less really so in the succeeding generations of men, than the first production of Adam was, when *God formed him of the dust of the earth, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life* (5). We may each of us say, with respect to the natural birth, and in an accommodated sense with respect to the spiritual too, *thine eyes did see my substance, being as yet imperfect, and in thy book all my members, which in continuance* of time *were fashioned, were written, when as yet there was none of them* (6). All the first gracious impressions that were made upon the mind, and all the gradual advances of them, till Christ was formed in the heart, and the new creature animated, must (as I shall hereafter shew at large) be ultimately and principally referred into a divine operation; and in this sense, it is God that brings every good purpose in the mind to the birth, and God that *gives strength to bring forth* (7).

But I omit the farther prosecution of these remarks at present, because they coincide with what I have said in former discourses, or what will occur in those which are yet to come: and shall only further consider the words,

(1) Mark x. 15. Luke xviii. 17. (2) Mat. v. 3.
(3) 1 Cor. xiv. 20. (4) 1 Cor. iii. 18. (5) Gen. ii. 7.
(6) Psal. cxxxix. 16. (7) Isa. lxvi. 9.

as they are a confirmation of, and therefore a proper introduction to, what I am to lay before you under the third general head of theſe diſcourſes; in which (as I have already ſhewn, who may be ſaid to be in an unregenerate ſtate, and how great that change is which regeneration makes in the ſoul) I ſhall now proceed,

Thirdly, To ſhew the high importance, yea, the abſolute neceſſity of this change.

Our Lord expreſſes it in a very lively and awakening manner, in theſe few determinate words, which are here before us: *Verily, verily, I ſay unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot ſee the kingdom of God.* You ſee how emphatical the words are: he who is himſelf invariable truth, *the ſame yeſterday, to-day, and forever* (1), repeats it again and again, with as much ſolemnity as he ever uſes upon any occaſion; repeats it to us, as he did to Nicodemus, "*Verily, verily, I ſay unto you*, that is, I ſeriouſly deliver it as a truth of infinite moment; *except a man*, i. e. any man, whatever his profeſſion, whatever his knowledge, or whatever his privileges, may be; though he be a Jew, though he be a Phariſee, though he be, as thou Nicodemus art, a ruler or a ſenator; except he *be born again*, and have that great change, ſo often deſcribed in the word of God, wrought by the operation of the Spirit in his mind, *he cannot ſee the kingdom of God:* he cannot by any means approach it, ſo as to enter into it, or have any ſhare in the important bleſſings which it contains."

That we may more fully underſtand, and enter into this weighty argument, I ſhall from theſe words,

I. Briefly conſider, what it is to *ſee the kingdom of God.*

II. Shew how abſolutely impoſſible it is, that any unregenerate man ſhould *ſee it.* And,

III. How wretched a thing it is to be deprived of the ſight and enjoyment of it.

And I am well perſuaded, that if you diligently attend to theſe things, you will be inwardly and powerfully

(1) Heb. xiii. 8.

convinced, that no argument could be more proper to demonſtrate the *importance* and *neceſſity* of *Regeneration*, than this, which our Lord has ſuggeſted in theſe awful, emphatical, and comprehenſive words.

I. I am to ſhew you what it is to *ſee the kingdom of God.*

And for the explication of it, it will be neceſſary to conſider—what we are to underſtand by *this kingdom*;—and what is meant by *ſeeing it.*

[1]. I would ſhew you what we are to underſtand by *the kingdom of God.*

And you will pardon me if I ſtate the matter pretty largely; becauſe the phraſe is uſed in ſcripture in different ſenſes; and the true interpretation of many paſſages in it depends on a proper diſtinction between them. You may obſerve then, for the explication of this phraſe, that the kingdom of God in general ſignifies, "the ſociety of thoſe, who profeſs themſelves the ſervants and ſubjects of Chriſt;" and in conſequence of this, that there are ſome paſſages, in which it peculiarly relates to "the imperfect diſpenſation of this kingdom, and the beginning of it in the world;" and others, in which it relates to "the more perfect form, which this ſociety is to bear in the world of glory."

1. The *kingdom of God*, or the *kingdom of heaven*, (for they are ſynonymous phraſes) does in the general ſignify "the ſociety of thoſe, who profeſs themſelves the ſervants and ſubjects of Chriſt."

You well know this was a phraſe uſed among the Jews; and therefore the original of it is to be traced from the Old Teſtament; and I apprehend it to be this: Almoſt every Chriſtian is aware, that in the early days of the Jewiſh commonwealth, as Samuel with great propriety expreſſes it, *God was their king* (1). Jehovah was not only the great object of their religious regard, as the creator and ſupporter of the whole world; but he was alſo their ſupreme civil magiſtrate, ſettling the forms of their political government, and reſerving to himſelf ſome of the chief acts of royal authority. They did in-

(1) 1 Sam. xii. 12.

deed afterwards *desire another king, like the other nations* round about them (1). But ſtill thoſe kings, being appointed by God, were indeed to be looked upon as no other than his vicegerents, though another kind of governors than he had originally inſtituted. By degrees their peculiar regard to the civil authority of God among them, as well as to his religious authority, which was nearly connected with it, in a great meaſure wore out; and their government went through a great many different forms, which it would be unneceſſary here particularly to deſcribe. Nevertheleſs, God was pleaſed to declare by king David, and by many others of his holy prophets, that he would in due time interpoſe to erect another, and a far more extenſive kingdom in the world; not indeed upon the ſame political principles with that which he exerciſed over the Jews; which principles would by no means have ſuited this extenſive deſign: but it ſhould be a kingdom in which the authority of the *God of heaven* ſhould be acknowledged, and his laws of univerſal righteouſneſs obſerved with greater care, and to nobler purpoſes, as well as by a vaſtly greater number of ſubjects than ever before. *This kingdom* he determined to commit to the government of the Meſſiah, who, with regard to this was called *the Lord's anointed, his king whom he ſet upon his holy hill of Zion* (2); and to whom indeed he would *give all power*, not only *on earth*, but *in heaven* too (3); ſo that having trained up his ſubjects here, in the diſcipline of holineſs and obedience, he ſhould at length tranſlate them to another and a *better country, that is, a heavenly*, where they ſhould *ſee his glory*, and ſhould *reign with him* in eternal life.

This plainly appears from the whole tenor of the Old and New Teſtament, to have been the grand plan of God, with reſpect to the Meſſiah's kingdom: and you will eaſily ſee, that coming from God as its great author, and referring to him as its end, it may, with great propriety, be called the *kingdom of God*; and ultimately terminating in the heavenly ſtate, it may alſo properly be called the *kingdom of heaven*. Theſe were phraſes, which prevailed in the Jewiſh nation, before Chriſt, or

(1) 1 Sam. viii. 5. (2) Pſal ii. 2, 6. (3) Mat. xxviii. 18.

his immediate fore-runner appeared; and indeed they were uſed by Daniel in a very remarkable manner, which probably made them ſo familiar to the Jews, who had ſome peculiar reaſons for ſtudying his writings, even more than thoſe of ſome other prophets. After that prophet had foretold the riſe and fall of ſeveral great empires of the world, he adds, *and in the days of theſe* laſt *kings* (i. e. of the Romans) *ſhall the God of Heaven ſet up a kingdom which ſhall not be deſtroyed,—but ſhall ſtand forever* (1). And the perſon whom *the Ancient of Days*, i. e. the eternal and ever bleſſed God ſhould fix on the throne of *this kingdom*, from his appearing in the human nature, is called *the ſon of man* (2); *I ſaw in the night viſions, and behold*, one *like the ſon of man, came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him; and there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, ſhould ſerve him: his dominion is an everlaſting dominion, which ſhall not paſs away, and his kingdom* that *which ſhall not be deſtroyed.*

In alluſion to this, when our Lord Jeſus Chriſt appeared, he called himſelf *the ſon of man;* and he particularly uſed this phraſe, and it was exceedingly proper that he ſhould, in this conference with Nicodemus, again and again (3). And all thoſe who, being convinced of the divine commiſſion he bore, ſubmitted themſelves to him, might in this reſpect be ſaid, *to enter into the kingdom of God*, or *of heaven;* that is, into the ſociety which had ſo long been foretold and expected under that title. *This kingdom*, as the above mentioned prophecy declared, was to be raiſed from very low beginnings, and under the perſonal miniſtry of Chriſt and his Apoſtles, till at laſt it ſhould extend through very diſtant regions of the world, and kings and princes ſhould ſubmit themſelves to it, and reckon it their glory to enrol themſelves among his ſubjects.

Agreeable to this meaning of the phraſe, and to this view with reſpect to the eſtabliſhment of *his kingdom*, our Lord opened his miniſtry with preaching, as John the Baptiſt had done, *the kingdom of heaven* (4). And you

(1) Dan. ii. 44. (2) Dan. vii. 13, 14. (3) John iii. 13, 14.
(4) Mat. iii. 2. iv. 17.

will ſee, that in moſt places of the Goſpel, where the phraſe occurs, it is to be taken in this ſenſe. Thus our Lord ſays, *Bleſſed are the poor in ſpirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven* (1); i. e. they are fit to be members of this ſociety, and to receive the bleſſings of it. *Seek firſt the kingdom of God, and his righteouſneſs* (2); i. e. labour to ſerve the intereſt of this ſociety that I am erecting, and to obtain and promote that righteouſneſs which it recommends, and is intended to eſtabliſh in the world. And again, *Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of ſuch is the kingdom of God* (3): perſons with ſuch a diſpoſition are moſt fit to become my ſubjects, and to enter into this holy and ſpiritual ſociety. And when our Lord ſays to the Phariſees, *Publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you* (4); he means, no doubt, they are more ready than you to join themſelves to the ſociety of thoſe who profeſs themſelves my ſubjects. And once more, when he ſpeaks of ſome who choſe the ſeverities of a ſingle life, that with leſs entanglements they might ſerve the intereſts of his church, he expreſſes it, by their *making themſelves eunuchs, for the kingdom of heaven's ſake* (5).

I ſhall only add, that the phraſe, by a near connexion with this ſenſe, ſometimes ſignifies *the charter of this ſociety*, or the privileges which it affords to its members; as when our Lord ſays, *Whoſoever ſhall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, ſhall in no wiſe enter therein* (6).

This then is the general ſenſe of this phraſe: it ſignifies "the ſociety of thoſe who ſhould ſubmit themſelves to the government of Chriſt, as appointed by God to rule over them; who are thereby to be conſidered as God's people and ſubjects." In conſequence of this you will eaſily apprehend,

2. That it comprehends "the more imperfect diſpenſation, under which the members of this ſociety are, during their abode in the preſent world."

All that paſſes here is indeed but the opening of Chriſt's kingdom: nevertheleſs, the phraſe does ſometimes more particularly refer to this opening; and there

(1) Mat. v. 3. (2) Mat. vi. 33. (3) Luke xviii. 16.
(4) Mark xxi. 31. (5) Mat. xix. 12. (6) Luke xviii. 17.

are ſeveral paſſages, in which it would be apparently abſurd to ſuppoſe it comprehended the glories of the inviſible ſtate, to which Chriſt intended finally to conduct his faithful ſervants. Thus our Lord tells the Phariſees, *The kingdom of God is come unto you* (1), i. e. that gracious diſpenſation under the Meſſiah, by which God is gathering ſubjects to his Son. And elſewhere he ſays to them, *The kingdom of God cometh not with obſervation*, i. e. not with ſuch outward ſhew and grandeur as you expect; but *behold it is within*, or (as it might be rendered) *among you* (2); God has begun to open and eſtabliſh it, though you know it not; and has actually brought many poor ſinners into it, whom you proudly deride as ignorant and accurſed. Thus alſo, when our Lord ſays to Peter, *I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven* (3), it would be moſt abſurd to ſuppoſe, he meant to grant to him the power of admitting into, or excluding from, the world of glory: but the plain meaning is, that he ſhould bear a diſtinguiſhed office in the church upon earth, and be the means of admitting Jews and Gentiles into it. Here, as in many other inſtances, the *kingdom of God*, or *of heaven*, means much the ſame with the profeſſing church of Chriſt, during its ſettlement in this imperfect ſtate: as it undoubtedly does, when Chriſt threatens his hearers, that *the kingdom of God ſhould be taken away from them* (4): and when he repreſents it as conſiſting of *good* and *bad* (5), of *tares* and *wheat* (6); but declares, that at the laſt day he will *gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity* (7); whereas nothing of that kind ſhall ever enter into the kingdom of glory. But yet,

3. It ultimately relates to "the more perfect form and ſtate of this ſociety in the kingdom of glory."

You very well know, that the deſign of God in his Goſpel was not to eſtabliſh a temporal kingdom, as the Jews expected: nor merely to form a body of men, who ſhould live upon earth with ſome peculiar forms of wor-

(1) Mat. xii. 28. (2) Luke xvii. 20, 21. (3) Mat. xvi. 19.
(4) Mat. xxi. 43. (5) Mat. xiii. 48. (6) Ver. 25.
(7) Mat. xiii. 41.

ſhip, under very excellent rules, and with diſtinguiſhed privileges of a ſpiritual nature; but that all theſe ultimately referred to the inviſible world. Thither *the ſon of man* was removed, when he had finiſhed the ſcenes of his labour and ſufferings upon earth; and thither all the true and faithful members of the kingdom were ſooner or later to be brought, and there were to have their final ſettlement and everlaſting abode, in a far more ſplendid and happy ſtate, than the greateſt monarch on earth has ever known: they ſhall there, as the Apoſtle moſt properly expreſſes it, *reign in life by Jeſus Chriſt* (1). Now as the kingdom of God upon earth is to be conſidered with a leading view to this; ſo we ſometimes find, that this glorious ſtate of its members, or (which will come much to the ſame thing) the ſociety of the faithful in this glorious ſtate, is, by way of eminence, called *the kingdom of God*: and with regard to this, they whoſe characters are ſuch that they ſhall be excluded from thence, are repreſented as having *no part in the kingdom of heaven*, though they have been by profeſſion members of the church of Chriſt on earth. Of this you have a remarkable inſtance, where our Lord ſays, *Not every one that ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord, ſhall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven* (2): now it was calling Chriſt, Lord, or profeſſing a regard to him as a divine teacher and governor, which was the very circumſtance that diſtinguiſhed the members of his kingdom on earth from the reſt of mankind: yet as they who do this inſincerely ſhall be excluded from final glory, it is ſaid, *they ſhall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*—So alſo the Apoſtle tells us, that *fleſh and blood*, i. e. ſuch groſs machines of animal nature as thoſe in which we now dwell, *cannot inherit the kingdom of God* (3); they cannot dwell in ſo pure a region; and therefore it is neceſſary, that before they enter upon it, thoſe who are found alive at the illuſtrious day of Chriſt's appearance, ſhould undergo a miraculous change to fit them for ſuch an abode.—In reference to this we are likewiſe told, that *then*, i. e. at the great reſurrection-day, *the righteous ſhall ſhine forth as the ſun in the kingdom of their*

(1) Rom. v. 17. (2) Mat. vii. 21. (3) 1 Cor. xv. 50.

Father (1).—And this is what our Lord moſt certainly had in view, when he tells the impenitent Jews, that *there ſhould be weeping and gnaſhing of teeth, when they ſhould ſee Abraham, and Iſaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and they themſelves thruſt out* (2); which could not be meant of the privileges of the Chriſtian church upon earth, in which the patriarchs had no ſhare; nor did the Jews at all envy thoſe profeſſing Chriſtians, who moſt evidently had: it muſt undoubtedly therefore be numbered among thoſe paſſages, in which *the kingdom of heaven* chiefly refers to the ſtate of glory. And I apprehend, the text here before us may be added to that catalogue; which leads us to ſhew,

2. What we are to underſtand by *ſeeing the kingdom of God.*

Now, in general, you will eaſily apprehend, that to ſee the kingdom is to enjoy the bleſſings of it.—There is no need of enumerating many paſſages of Scripture, where *to ſee* properly ſignifies *to enjoy*. This is apparently the ſenſe of it, when Chriſt declares, *Bleſſed are the pure in heart, for they ſhall ſee God* (3): for the Deity cannot be the object of ſight; but the promiſe is, that ſuch ſouls, (oh that we may be in their number!) ſhall forever enjoy the moſt delightful communications from him. And thus again we are to underſtand it, where it is ſaid, *What man is he that deſireth life, and loveth many days, that he may ſee*, i. e. that he may *enjoy good* (4)? For otherwiſe, to ſee it without enjoying it, would be a great aggravation of miſery and diſtreſs. And in this ſenſe it is moſt evident, that *ſeeing the kingdom of God* muſt here be put, for enjoying the chief and moſt important bleſſings appropriated to this happy ſtate; becauſe, as I have juſt been obſerving, condemned ſinners are repreſented in another ſenſe, as ſeeing that kingdom and the glorified ſaints in it; but viewing it only at an unapproachable diſtance, as a ſpectacle that fills them with horror and deſpair.

This therefore is, upon the whole, the meaning of this paſſage: "That no unregenerate ſoul ſhall finally have any part in the glory and happineſs, which Chriſt has

(1) Mat. xiii. 43. (2) Luke xiii. 28. (3) Mat. v. 8.
(4) Pſalm xxxiv. 12.

prepared for his faithful ſubjects; nor can any that appear to be ſuch, according to the tenor and conſtitution of the goſpel, be admitted into the number even of profeſſing Chriſtians." It is true indeed, a man may appear under ſuch a diſguiſe, that thoſe who are in this ſenſe *the ſtewards of the myſteries of God* (1), may, in the judgment of charity, be obliged to think well of him, and to admit him; but Chriſt, who intimately knows him, does even now diſcern him. The preſent external privileges he enjoys, are ſuch as he has no juſt right to; and in a little time, Chriſt will root him out of this kingdom with a vengeance, and he ſhall be openly declared a rebel, and one whom the *Lord* of it *never knew*, or never approved (2). So that upon the whole, it is ſo little a part that he had in the kingdom, and that for ſo ſhort a time, that it may, in the free language of Scripture, be ſaid, that he has *never ſeen the kingdom of God* at all; that he has *neither part nor lot in this matter* (3), has *no part* with God's choſen, *nor any lot* with his inheritance.

Having thus largely explained the meaning of this phraſe, I now proceed,

II. To ſhew you how certain this declaration of our Lord in the text is, or how abſolutely impoſſible it is, that any unregenerate man ſhould thus *ſee the kingdom of God*.

Now this I ſhall argue, partly "from the *immutable conſtitution of God*, whoſe kingdom it is;" and partly "from the *nature of its bleſſings*, which are ſuch, that no unregenerate man, while he continues in that ſtate, can have any fitneſs or capacity to enjoy them."

The firſt of theſe conſiderations is copious and important enough, to furniſh out abundant matter for the remainder of this diſcourſe: and it will be difficult to diſpatch it within theſe limits.

[1.] The impoſſibility there is, that any unregenerate man ſhould *enter into the kingdom of God*, appears "from the immutable conſtitution of that God, whoſe kingdom it is."

This might be ſufficiently argued, from the expreſs and emphatical words of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt in the text.

(1) 1 Cor. iv. 1. (2) Mat. vii. 23. (3) Acts viii. 21.

For he bore his Father's commiſſion to preach the *goſpel of the kingdom*, to publiſh the *good news* of its erection and ſucceſs, and likewiſe to declare its nature, and the method of admittance into it. And he is himſelf the great Sovereign of that kingdom; and conſequently cannot but perfectly, and beyond all compariſon with any other, know the whole of its conſtitution. But God has repeated the declaration by him, and by his other meſſengers to the children of men, in different ages, and under different diſpenſations, in ſuch a manner as ſuited its infinite importance. And, therefore, for the further illuſtration of the argument, I ſhall enumerate a great variety of ſcriptures that ſpeak the ſame language; not ſo much aiming therein at the ſpeculative proof of the point, as attempting to impreſs the conſciences of my hearers with a ſenſe of its certainty; and humbly hoping that ſome of thoſe ſharp-pointed arrows, which I am now drawing out of the quiver of God, may, by the direction of his Spirit, *enter the reins* of ſome againſt whom they are levelled (1), and convince them of the abſolute neceſſity of an entire change in their hearts, as well as their lives, or of the vanity of all thoſe hopes which they entertain, while that change is wanting. And let me beſpeak your attention, not to the conjectures or reaſoning of a frail mortal man, but to the ſolemn admonitions and declarations of the eternal God; and be aſſured that in one ſenſe or another, *his word ſhall take hold on you*, as it has done on ſinners of former generations, either for conviction, or condemnation.

That I may not be confounded in the multiplicity of my proofs, I ſhall range them under theſe three diſtinct heads.—The *prophets* of the Old Teſtament were commiſſioned to make this declaration:—it was renewed by the preaching of *Chriſt*;—and was ſupported by the teſtimony of the *Apoſtles* under the inſpiration of the Holy Spirit.

1. The *prophets* of the Old Teſtament were commiſſioned in effect to make this declaration, that no unregenerate ſinners ſhould *enter the kingdom of God*.

(1) Lam iii. 3.

Well might our Lord ſay to Nicodemus, *art thou a teacher in Iſrael, and knoweſt not theſe things?* For *to this* in effect *all the prophets bear witneſs*, and it might be learned from almoſt every page of their writings. It is true the particular phraſe of being *born again*, or *regenerated*, does not occur there; nor is it expreſsly ſaid, that an unregenerate man ſhall not be admitted into God's kingdom. But then the prophets every where aſſert, what is in effect the ſame, that no wicked man, who does not heartily repent of his ſins, and turn from them to God, muſt expect the Divine favour. Now if you conſider what we mean by an unregenerate man, according to the deſcription I have given before, you will find it is juſt the ſame as an impenitent ſinner: and if it be declared that ſuch are not to expect the Divine favour, nay, that they muſt certainly prove the objects of his diſpleaſure, this muſt certainly imply an excluſion from his kingdom, and muſt intend a great deal more than being deprived of everlaſting happineſs. And thus you ſee that all thoſe Scriptures, which ſpeak of the irreconcileable hatred of God againſt ſin, and againſt all impenitent ſinners, come in to do ſervice here, and are equivalent to the declaration in the text. And I may hereafter ſhew you, that there are many Scriptures in the Old Teſtament which lead men to conſider that change, ſaid to be ſo neceſſary, as what muſt be effected by a Divine operation on their ſouls. But as that will more properly come in under a following head, I ſhall at preſent content myſelf with ſelecting a few Scriptures, as a ſpecimen of many hundred more, in proof of the main point before us; and I beſeech you that you would endeavour to enter, not only into the *ſenſe*, but into the *ſpirit* of them.

You well know that unregenerate ſinners are wicked men; and of ſuch it is ſaid, *God is angry with the wicked every day* (1); or *all the day long*, as the original imports. The ſinner lies down and riſes up, goes out and comes in, under the Divine diſpleaſure: and though with great patience God bears with him for a while, he is deſcribed as preparing his dreadful artillery againſt him, to ſmite

(1) Pſalm vii. 11.

him even with a mortal wound: so far will he be from admitting him into his kingdom, that as it is there added, *if he turn not he will whet his sword; he has bent his bow and made it ready; he has also prepared for him the instruments of death* (1). And in another place, he describes the dreadful consequence of that preparation in most lively terms: *If I whet my glittering sword, and my hand take hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me: I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh from the beginning of revenges on the enemy;* i. e. as soon as I begin this awful work (2). And elsewhere he compares the destruction which he will bring upon sinners at last, to that which he executed on Sodom and Gomorrah, when he scattered fire and brimstone on their habitations, and reduced their pleasant country to a burning lake; *Upon the wicked he will rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this will be the portion of their cup* (3); and oh, how unlike the state and abode of those who are the happy subjects of his kingdom.

None of the prophets speak in milder and more gentle language to returning penitents than Isaiah; yet he declares, *there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked* (4). Yea, he does as it were, call in the concurrence of all who feared God, and who loved their country, to echo back and enforce the admonition: *say ye to the righteous that it shall be well with him;* but on the other hand, *wo to the wicked, it shall be ill with him; for the reward of his hands shall be given him* (5).

The enumeration would be endless; and it would require more than the time of a whole discourse, only to read over, without any comment or remark, one half of the passages which might properly be introduced on this occasion. I will therefore only mention two more, which, though some of you may *hear* with indifference, I confess I cannot *read* without a very sensible inward commotion.

The one is that passage in the Mosaic law, where God directs his servant to say, *If there be among you a root that*

(1) Psalm vii. 12, 13. (2) Deut. xxxii. 41, 42. (3) Psal. xi. 6.
(4) Isa. lvii. 21. (5) Isa. iii. 10, 11.

beareth gall and wormwood, or any unregenerate ſoul, *who when he hears the words of this curſe, ſhall bleſs himſelf in his heart, ſaying, I ſhall have peace though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenneſs to thirſt*, and run into one debauchery and ſin after another: *The Lord will not ſpare him, but the anger of the Lord, and his jealouſy ſhall ſmoke* and be inflamed *againſt that man;—and the Lord ſhall ſeparate him unto evil out of all the tribes of Iſrael, according to all the curſes of the covenant, that are written in the book of the law* (1). There is a terrible emphaſis of which we cannot but take notice here: God declares, that if *among all the thouſands of Iſrael*, there was *but one* ſuch preſumptuous ſinner, that thus *flattered himſelf in the way of his own heart*, he would make a terrible example of him, and *ſeparate that* one *man to evil*, out of thouſands and ten thouſands of his faithful and obedient ſervants.

This therefore is a paſſage full of apparent terror: the other is indeed a language of mercy; but it contains a moſt awful inſinuation, which appears, as good Archbiſhop Tillotſon expreſſes it, "like a razor ſet in oil, which wounds with ſo much the keener edge." *As I live, ſaith the Lord God, I have no pleaſure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O houſe of Iſrael* (2)? thereby plainly intimating, that notwithſtanding all that gentleneſs of the Divine nature, which he expreſſes in a moſt tender invitation, which he confirms even with the ſolemnity of an oath; yet, if ſinners did not *turn from their evil ways*, there was no remedy, but they muſt *die* for it.

And how, Sirs, will any of you that continue in an unregenerate ſtate, arm yourſelves againſt theſe terrors? Is it by ſaying, "that theſe are the thunders of Mount Sinai; that theſe are denunciations of the Old Teſtament; whereas the New ſpeaks in milder language?" You may eaſily know the contrary; and to this purpoſe I am further to ſhew you,

2. That this declaration was renewed by the preaching of *Chriſt*.

(1) Deut. xxix. 18—21. (2) Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

It is true indeed, that *grace and truth came by Jesus Christ* (1): yet all the grace and gentleness of that administration he brought did not contradict those awful threatenings; nay, it obliged him to set them in a stronger light.—He presently repeats to Nicodemus what he had just before asserted in the text, and declares, *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God* (2); i. e. "As he must be baptized with water, in order to a regular entrance into the society of my people, so he must also be sanctified and transformed by the cleansing and renewing influences of the Spirit, signified by the water there used, or he can have no part in the blessings which my gospel brings."—And that this must produce an universal change in the life as well as the heart, and a faithful subjection to the will of God, without which no profession will stand a man in any stead, our Lord solemnly declares in the conclusion of his incomparable discourse on the Mount: *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven: many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity* (3). And shall you, Sirs, merely for having *a name* and *place in his house*, escape; when those that have *preached his gospel*, and *wrought miracles* in confirmation of it, when those that personally *conversed with Christ*, and those that *ministered unto him* shall perish, if destitute of a holy temper of heart, and of its solid fruit in their lives?—Has not our Lord expressly said, that *he will gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity; and will cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth* (4)?—Nay, in his infinite compassion, he has given to sinners, as it were, a copy of the sentence that will another day be pronounced upon them; that they may meditate upon it, and review it, and judge whether they can bear the terror of its execution: hear

(1) John i. 17. (2) John iii. 5. (3) Mat. vii. 21, 22, 23. (4) Mat. xiii. 41, 42.

it attentively, and then ſay whether unregenerate ſinners ſhall *enter into his kingdom.* The dreadful doom is this; *Depart from me, ye curſed, into everlaſting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels* (1). And what now will you ſay to this? Can any ſoul of you imagine, that the Lord Jeſus Chriſt did not know what would paſs in this day in which he is appointed to preſide? or that knowing it, and knowing it would be ſomething different from this, he would, on any conſideration whatſoever, make a falſe repreſentation, and lay ſo much ſtreſs upon it? Yet one or other of theſe things you muſt ſecretly imagine; or muſt own, that every unregenerate ſinner, and you among the reſt, muſt not only be excluded from his preſence, but be condemned to ſuffer all the fury of his wrath, in company with devils and damned ſpirits, in final darkneſs and everlaſting burnings. It only remains that I ſhew you,

3. That the ſame teſtimony was renewed by the *Apoſtles*, under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

You know that they were authorized by their Great Maſter to declare, in an authentic manner, the conſtitution of his kingdom; and that *he who deſpiſes them, deſpiſes Chriſt* (2). Now I would fain perſuade you all, to conſider this argument as it lies in Scripture; to read over the epiſtolary parts of the New Teſtament in this view, to obſerve what encouragement they any of them give to an unregenerate ſinner, to expect any part of *the kingdom of heaven.* In the mean time, permit me to preſent you with a few texts, as a ſpecimen of the reſt.

The apoſtle Paul, in his epiſtle to the Romans, does indeed ſpeak of God's juſtifying the *ungodly* (3); but leſt any ſhould vainly imagine that he encourages the hope of thoſe that continue ſo, he expreſsly tells us, in the very ſame epiſtle, that *the wrath of God is revealed from heaven againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men* (4); and that ere long this wrath ſhall be executed, even in the day of the more ample *revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds:—To them that do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteouſneſs,* (which is the character of every un-

(1) Mat. xxv. 41. (2) Luke x. 16. (3) Rom. iv. 5. (4) Rom. i. 18.

regenerate ſinner) *indignation and wrath; tribulation and anguiſh upon every ſoul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew firſt*, as having had the moſt ſignal advantages, though advantages inferior to yours, *and alſo of the Gentile* (1). And farther he aſſures us, that *to be carnally minded is death*; and that *the carnal mind*, which univerſally prevails in men, till by regenerating grace they are made ſpiritual, *is enmity againſt God, and is not ſubject to the law of God, neither indeed can be* (2).—In another epiſtle he mentions it as a firſt principle, in which, it might rationally be ſuppoſed, no Chriſtian was uninſtructed; *Know ye not*, ſays he, *that the unrighteous ſhall not inherit the kingdom of God* (3)? And elſewhere he declares, that all external modes of religion, ſeparate from that entire change of ſoul which I have deſcribed, are worthleſs and vain: *In Chriſt Jeſus*, ſays he, or to thoſe that deſire any part in him and his kingdom, *neither circumciſion availeth any thing, nor uncircumciſion, but a new creature* (4).—He likewiſe tells us to this purpoſe in another place, that his *grace, which has appeared unto all men, teaches us to deny ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, and to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world* (5); and yet, after all, to acknowledge, that it is *not by works of righteouſneſs, which we have done, but according to his mercy he ſaves us, by the waſhing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghoſt, which he has ſhed on us abundantly through Jeſus Chriſt our Saviour* (6). And *without holineſs*, which is the effect of theſe ſacred operations upon the ſoul, he expreſsly tells us in another place, that *no man ſhall ſee the Lord* (7).—And to allege but one more paſſage from him: as it is evident, that all unregenerate ſinners, and only they, are ignorant of God, and diſobedient to the Goſpel; he ſolemnly aſſures us, that inſtead of receiving ſuch at laſt into his kingdom, *the Lord Jeſus ſhall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Goſpel of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt: who ſhall be puniſhed with everlaſting deſtruction from the preſence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power* (8).—This is the teſtimony of the apoſtle Paul in

(1) Rom. ii. 5, 6, 8, 9. (2) Rom. viii. 6, 7.
(3) 1 Cor. vi. 9. (4) Gal. vi. 15. (5) Tit. ii. 11, 12.
(6) Tit. iii. 5, 6. (7) Heb. xii. 14. (8) 2 Theſſ. i. 7, 8, 9.

his own emphatical words, zealous as he was for the doctrine of free grace, which ſuch declarations as theſe do not in the leaſt degree contradict.

Let us now hear his brethren, the other apoſtles of the Lord.—James urges ſinners, if they ever deſire to *draw nigh to God*, and to have him *draw nigh to them*, to *cleanſe their hands, and purify their hearts* (1). And yet more expreſsly he ſays, when he ſpeaks of thoſe who ſhould *receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promiſed to them that love him; of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we ſhould be a kind of firſt-fruits of his creatures* (2).—The apoſtle Peter deſcribes Chriſtians, as thoſe whoſe *ſouls were purified in obeying the truth through the Spirit, being born again, not of corruptible ſeed, but of incorruptible* (3); and as thoſe, who were made *partakers of the Divine Nature, having eſcaped the corruption that is in the world through luſt* (4).—Again, John, the beloved diſciple, tells us, that *every one that doth righteouſneſs is born of God* (5); but *he* that *committeth ſin is of the devil* (6): and that *every one that has* a well-grounded *hope of being like Chriſt, and ſeeing him as he is, when he appears, purifies himſelf, even as he is pure* (7).—And once more, the apoſtle Jude, as he deſcribes thoſe who are *ſenſual, and have not the Spirit*, as men, that, if they were *ſaved* at all, muſt be *plucked out of the fire* (8); ſo he echos back that awful prophecy, which Enoch had ſo long ſince delivered, that *the Lord will come with ten thouſand of his ſaints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all that are ungodly, of all* thoſe *ungodly deeds and words, by* which they have violated his law (9).

This then appears, from the whole tenor of the Scriptures, to be the poſitive and immutable conſtitution of the great God, "that none who are unregenerate ſhall be admitted to enjoy the happineſs of heaven." And from the view that we have taken of the ſacred writings it is manifeſt, that this, in every age, has been the language of the word of God; and under every diſpenſation we have ſufficient evidence of this important truth. This is the doctrine of the Old Teſtament; and many

(1) Jam. iv. 8. (2) Jam. i. 12, 18. (3) 1 Pet. i. 22, 23.
(4) 2 Pet. 1, 4. (5) 1 John ii. 29. (6) 1 John iii. 8.
(7) 1 John iii. 2, 3. (8) Jude ver. 19, 23. (9) Jude ver. 14, 15.

are the paſſages that I have offered from the *law of Moſes*, and from *the Prophets*, and the *Pſalms*, that ſhew it is impoſſible an unrenewed ſoul ſhould enter into heaven. And the ſame alſo is aſſerted in the ſtrongeſt terms in the New Teſtament; and when Chriſt came to ſet *the Goſpel of the kingdom* in a clearer light, the purport of the declaration that he makes to Nicodemus in the text, was frequently repeated by him in the courſe of his preaching, and repreſented as the rule he would regard at the laſt day. And the inſpired Apoſtles ſpeak the ſame thing with an united voice, and teſtify at large in their epiſtles, that it is abſolutely neceſſary we ſhould *be born again*, if ever we would hope to *ſee the kingdom of God*.

So that now, Sirs, I may ſay, *Call, if there be any that will anſwer; and to which of the ſaints will you turn* (1), to encourage your vain and preſumptuous hope, of finding your lot among God's people in the kingdom of glory, if you are ſtrangers to that important and univerſal change, which we before deſcribed as regeneration in the Scripture ſenſe of the word? The prophets under the Old Teſtament, and Chriſt and his Apoſtles under the New, concur, in all the variety of the moſt awful language, to expoſe ſo preſumptuous a hope. And is it not audacious madneſs in any to venture their ſouls upon it? Thus you would undoubtedly judge of any man, who ſhould ſtrike a dagger into his breaſt, or diſcharge a piſtol at his head, on this preſumption, that the almighty power of God could prevent his death, though the heart or the brain were pierced. But it is much greater folly for a man, while he continues in an unregenerate ſtate, to promiſe himſelf a part in the kingdom of heaven. For though there would be no reaſon in the world to expect a miraculous interpoſition, to ſave a life which a man was ſo reſolutely bent to deſtroy; yet none can ſay, that ſuch an interpoſition would contradict any of the expreſs engagements of God's word; whereas to admit an unregenerate ſinner into the regions of glory, would

(1) Job v. 1.

be violating, not *this*, or *that* ſingle declaration, but the whole ſeries and tenor of it: and we ſhall farther ſhew, in the next Diſcourſe, that it would alſo be, in effect, altering the very nature of the heavenly kingdom itſelf, as well as its conſtitution. Now what hope can be more deſperate, than that which can have no ſupport, but in the ſubverſion of the Redeemer's kingdom, and even of the eternal throne of God, the foundations of which are righteouſneſs and truth!

SERMON V.

OF THE INCAPACITY OF AN UNREGENERATE PERSON FOR RELISHING THE ENJOYMENTS OF THE HEAVENLY WORLD.

JOHN iii. 3.

———Except a man be born again he cannot ſee the kingdom of GOD.

IN order to demonſtrate the neceſſity of regeneration, of which I would fain convince not only your underſtandings, but your conſciences, I am now proving to you, that without it, it is impoſſible to enter into the kingdom of God: and how weighty a conſideration that is I am afterwards to repreſent.

That it is thus impoſſible, the words in the text do indeed ſufficiently prove: but for the further illuſtration of the ſubject, I have propoſed to conſider it under two diſtinct views.

I have already ſhewn it is impoſſible, becauſe "the conſtitution of the kingdom of heaven is ſuch, that God has ſolemnly declared, and this under different diſpenſations, and more or leſs plainly in all ages of his church, that no unregenerate perſon, *i. e.* no impenitent ſinner, ſhall have any part in it." And I am now further to ſhew,

[2.] That "the *nature* of the *future happineſs* (which is here chiefly ſignified by *the kingdom of God*) is ſuch, that an unregenerate perſon would be incapable of reliſhing it, even upon a ſuppoſition of his being admitted into it."

This is a thought of so great importance, and so seldom represented in its full strength, that I shall at present confine my discourse entirely to it.

I know, sinners, it will be one of the most difficult things in the world, to bring you to a serious persuasion of this truth. You think heaven is so lovely, and so glorious a place, that if you could possibly get an admittance thither, you should certainly be happy. But I would now set myself, if possible, to convince you that this is a rash and ill-grounded persuasion; and that on the contrary, if you were now in the regions of glory, and in the society of those blessed inhabitants, that unrenewed nature and unsanctified heart of yours, would give you a disrelish for all the sublimest entertainments of that blissful place, and turn heaven itself into a kind of hell to you.

Now for the demonstration of this, it is only necessary for you seriously to consider "what a kind of happiness that of heaven is, as it is represented to us in the word of God;" for from thence undoubtedly we are to take our notions of it.

You might to be sure sit down and imagine a happiness to yourselves, which would perfectly suit your degenerate taste; a happiness, which, the more entirely you were enslaved to flesh and sense, the more exquisitely you would be able to enter into it. If God would assign you a region in that beautiful world, where you should dwell in fine houses magnificently furnished, and gaily adorned; where the most harmonious music should sooth your ear, and delicious food and generous wines in a rich variety should regale your taste: if he should give you a splendid retinue of people, to cares and attend you, offering you their humblest services, and acknowledging the most servile dependence upon your favour: especially if with all this he should furnish you with a set of companions just of your own temper and disposition, with whom you might spend what proportion of time you pleased, in gaming and jollity, in riot and debauchery, without any interruption from the reproof, or even the example of the children of God, or from indispositions of body, or remorse of conscience:

this you would be ready to call life and happineſs indeed: and if the great diſpoſer of all things were but to add perpetuity to ſuch a ſituation, you would not envy perſons of a more refined taſte the heaven you loſt, for ſuch a Paradiſe as this.

Such indeed was the happineſs which Mahomet promiſed to his followers: flowery ſhades and gay dreſſes, luxurious fare and beautiful women, are deſcribed with all the pomp of language in almoſt every page of his Alcoran, as the glorious and charming rewards which were to be beſtowed on the faithful after the reſurrection. And if this were the felicity which the Goſpel promiſed, extortioners and idolators, whoremongers and drunkards, would be much fitter to *inherit the kingdom of God*, than the moſt pious and mortified ſaint that ever appeared on earth. But here, as almoſt every where elſe, the Bible and the Alcoran ſpeak a very different language; and far from leading us into ſuch groſs and ſenſual expectations, our Lord Jeſus Chriſt has told us that *the children of the reſurrection neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are like the angels of God in heaven* (1), and enjoy ſuch pure and ſpiritual delights, as are ſuited to ſuch holy and excellent creatures.

It is true that in the book of Revelations, ſtately palaces and ſhining habits, delicious fruit and harmonious muſic are all mentioned, as contributing to the happineſs of thoſe, who have the honour to inhabit the New Jeruſalem. But then the ſtyle of that obſcure and prophetical book naturally leads us to conſider theſe merely as figurative phraſes, which are made uſe of to expreſs the happineſs that Divine wiſdom and love has prepared for the righteous, in a manner accommodated to the weakneſs of our conceptions: or at leaſt, if in any of theſe reſpects proviſion be made for the entertainment of a *glorified body*, whatever its methods of ſenſation and perception will be, all will be temperate and regular: and after all, this is *even there* repreſented but as the leaſt conſiderable part of our happineſs, the height of which is made to conſiſt in the moſt elevated ſtrains of devotion, and in an entire

(1) Mat. xxii. 30.

and everlasting devotedness to the service of God and of the Lamb.

Let us therefore immediately proceed to settle the point in question, by a more particular survey of the several branches of the celestial felicity, as represented to us in the word of God; and from thence it will undeniably appear, that were an unregenerate soul in the same place with the blessed, and surrounded with the same external circumstances, the temper of the mind would not by any means allow him to participate of their happiness. For it is plain the Scripture represents the happiness of heaven, as consisting,—in the perfection of our minds in knowledge and holiness;—in the sight and service of the ever blessed God,—in beholding the glory of our exalted Redeemer;—and enjoying the society of glorious angels and perfected saints,—throughout an endless eternity.——Now, sinners, it is impossible you should enter into any such delights as these, while you continue in an unregenerate state.

1. One very considerable part of the happiness of heaven consists, "in that perfection of knowledge and holiness to which the blessed shall be there exalted;" in which the unregenerate soul can have no pleasure.

Thus we are told, that *the spirits of just men* shall there be *made perfect* (1); for *nothing that defiles*, as every degree of moral imperfection does, *shall enter into the New Jerusalem* (2). An Old Testament saint conceived of future happiness, as consisting in *being satisfied with the likeness of God* (3): a character that is manifestly most agreeable to the view of it, which the beloved disciple gives us, where he says, that *when Christ shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is* (4); which must certainly refer to the glories of the mind, which are of infinitely greater importance than the highest imaginable beauty and ornament, that can be put upon the corporeal part of our nature in its most illustrious state.

Now from this perfection and holiness, which shall then be wrought in the soul, there will naturally arise an unspeakable complacency and joy, something resembling

(1) Heb. xiii. 23. (2) Rev. xxi 27. (3) Psal. xvii. 15.
(4) 1 John iii. 2.

that which the bleſſed God himſelf poſſeſſes, in the ſurvey of the infinite and unſpotted rectitude of his own moſt holy nature. And in proportion to the degree, in which *the eyes of our underſtandings are enlightened* to diſcern wherein true excellency conſiſts, will the ſoul be delighted in the conſciouſneſs of ſuch conſiderable degrees of it in itſelf.

But ſurely it will be ſuperfluous for me to undertake to demonſtrate, that an unregenerate ſoul can have no part in this divine pleaſure, which implies the complete renewal of the mind as its very foundation. For to imagine that he might, would be ſuppoſing him regenerate and unregenerate at the ſame time. As Mr. Baxter very well expreſſes it, "the happineſs of heaven is holineſs; and to talk of being happy without it is as apparent nonſenſe, as to talk of being well without health, or being ſaved without ſalvation."

I would only add on this head, that the higheſt improvement of our intellectual faculties could not make us happy, without ſuch a change in the affections and the will, as I have before deſcribed under the former general head. For the more clear and diſtinct the knowledge of true excellence and perfection is, the greater would be your anguiſh and horror, to ſee and feel yourſelves entirely deſtitute of it; and it is exceeding probable that ſpirits of the moſt elevated genius have the keeneſt ſenſation of that infamy and miſery, which is inſeparable from the prevalence of ſinful diſpoſitions in ſuch minds as theſe.

2. Another very conſiderable branch of the celeſtial happineſs, is that which ariſes "from the contemplation and enjoyment of the ever bleſſed God;" but of this likewiſe an unregenerate ſinner is incapable.

As our own reaſon aſſures us, that God is the greateſt and beſt of beings, and the moſt deſerving object of our inquiries and regards, one would think it would naturally lead us to imagine, that the perfection and happineſs of the human ſoul conſiſts in the knowledge and enjoyment of him; and that when it arrives at the ſeat of complete felicity, it muſt intimately know him, and converſe with him. And in this view, I have ſometimes

been surprised, that men of such distinguished abilities, as some of the heathen poets and philosophers appear to have been, should have had no greater regard to the Supreme Being in the descriptions which they give us of the future happiness. That sort of friendship for them, which an acquaintance with their writings must give to a person of any relish for the beauties of composition, makes one almost unwilling to expose the low and despicable ideas, which they often give of the state of their greatest heroes in the regions of immortality. But the word of God speaks a very different language. Our Lord represents the rewards to be bestowed on the *pure in heart*, by telling us that *they shall see*, i. e. contemplate and enjoy *God* (1): and virtuous souls who overcome the temptations with which they are here surrounded, shall be *made as pillars in the house of their God, and shall go no more out* (2): and it is elsewhere said that *his servants shall serve him, and shall see his face* (3). And David's views under a darker dispensation rose to such a degree of refinement, as to say, *As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness* (4); which he mentions as a felicity infinitely superior to all the delights of the most prosperous sinner.

But now, sinners, it is utterly impossible that while you continue in an unregenerate state, you should *behold the face of God* with pleasure. The unutterable delight which the blessed inhabitants of heaven find in it, arises not merely from the abstract ideas of his essential perfections, but from a sense of his favour and love to them. It is this that gives a relish to the whole survey, and rejoices the heart of all the saints, both in heaven and on earth. He is a God of awful majesty and irresistible power, of infinite wisdom and unspotted holiness, of unerring justice, invariable fidelity, and inexhaustible goodness; and *this God is our God, he will be our guide and our portion for-ever* (5). And were it not for this view, let a creature think of God with ever so much spirit and propriety, he must *think of him, and be troubled* (6); yea, he must be filled with unutterable horror and confusion, as the devil

(1) Mat. v. 8. (2) Rev. iii. 12. (3) Rev. xxii. 3, 4.
(4) Psal. xvii. 15. (5) Psal. xlviii. 14. lxxiii. 26. (6) Psal. lxxvii. 3.

is at the thought of an infinitely perfect Being, in whom he has no intereſt, from whom he has nothing friendly to expect; and if nothing friendly, then every thing dreadful.

Now it is certain, ſinners, that while you continue in an unregenerate ſtate, under the influence of that *carnal mind* which *is enmity againſt God* (1), and full of unconquerable rebellion againſt his law, there can be no foundation for a friendſhip between him and your ſouls; nor for any perſuaſion, or any apprehenſion of your intereſt in his favour and love. Friendſhip, you know, ſuppoſes ſomething of a ſimilitude of nature and ſentiment; for as God himſelf argues, *how can two walk together except they be agreed* (2)? Now I have before obſerved to you at large, that *God* being *of purer eyes than to behold evil* (3), muſt neceſſarily *hate all the workers of iniquity: the foolish therefore ſhall not ſtand in his ſight* (4), or ſhall not be admitted to ſuch a ſituation: nor would they indeed be able to endure it.——Let conſcience judge what ſatisfaction you could find in the preſence of a God, that you knew ſcorned and hated you, even while he ſuffered you to continue among the crowd of his children and ſervants. The more lively ideas you had of the beauty and perfection of the Divine nature, the more you muſt *loath yourſelves* for being ſo unlike him, and ſo abominable to him: and what pleaſure do you think conſiſtent with ſuch ſelf-contempt and abhorrence? Or rather, would not the wretched degeneracy of your nature lead you another way; and a kind of unconquerable ſelf-love, joined even with this conſciouſneſs of deformity and vileneſs, lead you to hate God himſelf? It is deſcribed as the fatal effect of prevailing wickedneſs in the heart, *my ſoul loathed them, and their ſoul alſo abhorred me* (5). And thus would it probably work in you, and produce in your wretched breaſts a mortal hatred againſt him, and an envious rage at the thought of his perfect happineſs; a ſtate of mind of all others that can be imagined, the moſt odious, and the moſt tormenting. How, Sirs, could your hearts,

(1) Rom. viii. 7. (2) Amos iii. 3. (3) Hab. i. 13.
(4) Pſal. v. 5. (5) Zach. xi. 8.

poſſeſſed with theſe diabolical paſſions, bear to ſee the beams of his glory ſurrounding you on every ſide? How could you bear to hear the ſongs and adorations, that were continually addreſſed to his throne; and to obſerve the humble attendance of all the hoſts of heaven about it, who perpetually reckon it their honour and happineſs to be employed in obedience to his commands? Such a ſight of the glory and felicity of your Divine enemy would make you, ſo far as your limited nature was capable of it, miſerable even in proportion to the degree in which he is happy. This was, no doubt, the torment of the devils as ſoon as they had harboured a thought of hoſtility againſt God; and the remembrance of that glory in which they once ſaw him, and which they know he ſtill invariably poſſeſſes, is ſurely an everlaſting vexation to them: and it would be ſo to you, if you were within the ſight of it.

But further, the bleſſed in heaven find their everlaſting entertainment "in the *ſervice* of God." *They reſt not day and night, ſaying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty* (1); i. e. they are continually employed, either in the immediate acts of devotion, or in other ſervices, in which they ſtill maintain a devotional temper, and are breathing out their ſouls in holy affections, while their active powers are employed in the execution of his commands. But as I have already ſhewn you, that while in an unregenerate ſtate you could have no ſenſe of his favour to you; it is very apparent, that you could have no ſentiments of gratitude and love towards him. So that while angels and glorified ſaints were breathing out their ſouls in the moſt delightful and rapturous praiſes, you muſt keep a ſullen kind of ſilence; or, if it were poſſible that your harps and voices ſhould ſound as melodiouſly as theirs, it would be all ceremony and ſhew: the muſic of the heart would be wanting; and you would look on all the external forms of ſervice but as a tedious taſk, and count it your misfortune, that the cuſtoms of the place obliged you to attend them. You may the more eaſily apprehend and believe this, when you conſider what little reliſh you now have for thoſe ſolemnities of Divine wor-

(1) Rev. iv. 8.

ſhip, in which ſincere Chriſtians have the moſt lively foretaſtes of heaven. You know, in your own conſciences, that ſhort and interrupted as our public ſervices are, they are the burden of your lives. You know that you ſay, in your hearts at leaſt, *When will the Sabbath be paſt, and the new moon be gone* (1)? Judge then how inſupportable it would be to you, to ſpend an everlaſting Sabbath thus. I queſtion not, but to your wretched ſpirits annihilation would appear vaſtly preferable to an eternal exiſtence ſo employed.

3. Another very conſiderable branch of the happineſs of heaven, is that which ariſes "from the ſight of the glory of an exalted *Redeemer*;" but for this likewiſe no unconverted ſinner can have any reliſh.

This is a view of the future happineſs, which our Lord gives us, when he prays for his people in thoſe memorable words, engraven, as I hope, upon many of our hearts; *Father, I will that they whom thou haſt given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou haſt given me* (2). And he elſewhere promiſes it, as the great reward he would beſtow upon his people; *If any man ſerve me, let him follow me: and where I am, there alſo ſhall my ſervant be* (3). And agreeable to this, the Apoſtle Paul repreſents it as the tranſporting view in which he conſidered the happineſs of the future world; *I deſire*, ſays he, *to depart, and to be with Chriſt; which is far better* (4); incomparably beyond any of the enjoyments of the preſent world which can come into competition with it.—But for *this part* of the happineſs of angels, and of *the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect*, it is alſo evident, that you, ſinners, can have no reliſh.

The ſight of Chriſt will afford holy ſouls a tranſporting delight, becauſe they will regard it as the glory of their Redeemer and their friend, and as a pledge and ſecurity of their own glory. But what foundation can you, ſinners, find for ſuch a joyful ſympathy with Chriſt, and ſuch a comfortable concluſion with regard to yourſelves? Such is the wretched degeneracy of your nature, that though Chriſt be indeed *the chiefeſt among ten thouſand*, and

(1) Amos viii. 5. (2) John vii. 24. (3) John xii. 26. (4) Phil. i. 23.

altogether lovely (1), being *the brightneſs of* his Father's *glory, and the expreſs image of his perſon* (2), poſſeſſed of every divine perfection and excellence; yet you now ſlight and neglect him, and diſcern in him *no form or comelineſs, for which he is to be deſired* (3): and were you unregenerate in heaven, the ſame principle would prevail. Now where there is no love to a perſon, there can be no delight in his converſe, nor any pleaſure in his happineſs. Nay, the contrariety of your nature to his would rather occaſion averſion and terror. You could not but know, that the bleſſed Jeſus is *holy* and *undefiled*, and *ſeparate from ſinners* (4); that he abhors all moral evil to ſuch a degree, that he laid aſide all the glory and entertainments of heaven, that he might deſtroy the intereſt of ſin in this world of ours, and might *purify to himſelf a peculiar people, zealous of good works* (5): and when you ſhould recollect at the ſame time that ſinfulneſs that continued to reign in your hearts, and made you to *every good work reprobate* (6), you could not but know that you muſt be hateful to him: and therefore could not but fear, leſt his almighty power ſhould be exerciſed for your puniſhment and deſtruction: and thus your terror muſt riſe, in proportion to the ſenſible evidence you had of his dignity and authority. In a word, you would ſtand like guilty rebels in the preſence-chamber of their injured and diſpleaſed Sovereign: his throne and his ſceptre, his robe and his crown, his courtiers and his guards, though in themſelves ſplendid and magnificent objects, only ſerve to terrify and amaze them, while they diſplay the grandeur and power of their enemy.

4. Another very conſiderable branch of the celeſtial happineſs will be "the ſociety of angels and glorified ſaints;" but for this likewiſe an unregenerate ſinner muſt be unfit.

You know, that when the Apoſtle ſpeaks of our alliance to the heavenly world, he repreſents it as a ſocial ſtate; where excellent ſpirits dwell together, and converſe with each other with mutual eſteem and endearment: *ye are come*, ſays he, *to the heavenly Jeruſalem, and*

(1) Cant. v. 10, 16. (2) Heb. i. 3. (3) Iſa. liii. 2.
(4) Heb. vii. 26. (5) Tit. ii. 14. (6) Tit. i. 16.

to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to the spirits of just men made perfect (1). It is *sitting down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, with all the patriarchs and prophets, all the apostles and martyrs *in the kingdom of heaven* (2): and perhaps you think you shall want nothing more to complete your happiness, than to be admitted to a place among them. But reflect a little more attentively upon the circumstances of things, and I am persuaded you will form a different judgment.

There is no reason to doubt, but that at your first entrance into the regions of glory you would be agreeably struck with the view of those inhabitants. As for those beauties of their character, which consist in love to God, and in zeal for his honour and interest, it is certain, that you would be insensible of them, and pay but little regard to them: but the humanity and benevolence of their temper would, no doubt, render them agreeable to you; and so much the more, as self-love might lead you to expect some personal advantage by it. And it is more than possible, that you would be much prejudiced in their favour by those resplendent and attractive forms in which they appear; forms, no doubt, far more beautiful and engaging than any which the children of men ever saw upon earth. On both these accounts it might be natural enough for you, at first, to address them with an air of respect, as persons that you could be glad to be upon good terms with, and in whose friendship you could desire a share.

But how do you think that any such proposal of friendship would be received by an angel, or a glorified saint? No doubt, if there were any prospect of converting you, or any hope you might be brought to a devout and holy temper, they would immediately become *preachers of righteousness* to you; and endeavour by the most rational, the most pathetic, and the most insinuating address, to awaken and charm you to a sense of religion, and so to form you to a capacity for happiness. But they would know, that according to the eternal constitution of God, there

(1) Heb. xii. 22, 23. (2) Mat. viii. 11.

could be no room to entertain such an hope; but that *being filthy*, you must be *filthy still* (1): and therefore, as they would know you to be incorrigible, their love to God, and their concern to be approved and accepted by him, would prevent their forming any intimate friendship with persons whose natures were so contrary to him, and on whom he looked with such irreconcileable abhorrence. And besides this, their own personal sanctity of character would give them an aversion to such corrupt and degenerate creatures: so that how much soever they might pity your condition, they would turn away from you, as objects whose presence and converse were not to be endured.

And do you not easily apprehend, that such a refusal on their part would be both shameful and very provoking to you? For which way could you bear it, to be thus rejected and dishonoured by the most excellent part of the creation; by those whom perhaps you once intimately knew, and with whom you conversed upon equal terms; nay, by many who were once much your inferiors, and whom, perhaps, in the pride of your hearts, you would not condescend to regard? The natural effect of this must surely be, that you would soon be proportionably displeased and enraged with the refusal, as you were at first charmed at their appearance: and when you saw that transporting pleasure which they took in the affection and friendship of each other, and the joy which the Divine favour poured into their souls, while you, in the very same place, were excluded from these rich entertainments, your hearts would soon burn with envy and indignation; and as much as you before admired them, you, upon this, would come to hate them. And, perhaps, that hatred would put you upon some attempt to interrupt, or even, if it were possible, to destroy that happiness which you were not allowed to share. But, then, when you saw them continually under the Divine protection, and *compassed with his favour, as with a shield* (2), so that your malice could not reach them, all the keenness and rancour of your spirit would recoil upon itself; you would fly from their presence, as insup-

(1) Rev. xxii. 11. (2) Psal. v. 12.

portable; and would be glad to retire to ſome meaner apartment, or to hide yourſelves in the ſhades of darkneſs; ſo that you might but get rid of the ſight of ſo many dazzling objects, whoſe luſtre, inſtead of cheering your vitiated eye, would pain and overpower it.

But if you ſhould not be tranſported to this diabolical exceſs; if it were poſſible for you to behold the glorified ſaints, and to live among them, without theſe envious and tormenting paſſions; yet ſurely you would want a reliſh for the moſt entertaining part of their converſation. Had you indeed a good natural genius, which to be ſure many unconverted ſinners have, it might be very agreeable to hear them diſcourſing of the wonders of nature; and that curioſity, which is in ſome meaſure incident even to perſons of the meaneſt capacities, would make it pleaſant to hear them recount the important hiſtory relating to the revolutions of the angelic world, which we on this earth are entirely ſtrangers to, or at leaſt have been very little acquainted with them. But ſurely the moſt delightful topics of converſation, which heaven itſelf can furniſh out, muſt be thoſe which are religious and divine; the infinite perfections of the ever bleſſed God; the perſonal glories and incomparable love of his condeſcending, but exalted Son; and the ſanctifying operations of the bleſſed Spirit on the ſoul, transforming it into the Divine Image, and making it meet for eternal glory. Yea, even when the bleſſed ſpirits above are handling philoſophical or hiſtorical ſubjects, they ſtill conſider them with a regard to God, as his perfections are diſplayed and illuſtrated in the works of his hands, and in the conduct of his providence. And here their pleaſure flows, not merely from a ſet of rational ideas, which ariſe in their own minds, or are ſuggeſted to them by others: but from the exerciſe of thoſe devout affections upon the bleſſed God, which are correſpondent to theſe ſeveral ſubjects of diſcourſe.

And can you, Sirs, who are *alienated from the divine life* (1), and accuſtomed to live in a continual neglect and forgetfulneſs of the Great Parent of univerſal nature, can you reliſh ſuch ſubjects as theſe? You would, no doubt,

(1) Eph. iv. 18.

be diſcontented and uneaſy in ſuch a ſcene: the heavenly oratory of this holy ſociety would have no charms for you; but you would be longing for ſome of thoſe vain and worthleſs companions, which you were ſo fond of here upon earth, to hear a merry ſtory, or a ſong, or to join with them in the pleaſures of a debauch.

5. Another conſiderable branch of the happineſs of heaven ariſes "from the aſſured proſpect of the *everlaſting continuance* of this felicity;" but, if an unregenerate ſoul could find any entertainment at all in heaven, he certainly could have no ground for ſuch an expectation of its continuance.

When the children of God on earth think of the happineſs of heaven, the eternity of it makes a very deep impreſſion on their hearts, and even ſwallows up their ſouls with ardent deſire and unutterable joy: it raiſes their eſteem, and animates their hope, while they reflect on that *exceeding and eternal weight of glory* (1), that *houſe not made with hands, eternal in the heavens* (2), and that *inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and which fadeth not away* (3). And no doubt but the bleſſed in heaven regard it in the ſame view, and all the pleaſures they enjoy are vaſtly increaſed by the proſpect of their endleſs duration; ſo that by the anticipation of an eternity ſtill to come, they do, as it were, every moment enjoy an infinite ſatisfaction. But as for you, ſinners, while you are ſo ill attempered to the happineſs of heaven, the proſpect of an eternal abode there would not, on the principles I have laid down above, be a proſpect of eternal happineſs, but rather, on the whole, of eternal uneaſineſs to you.

But ſuffer me a little to diſcourſe upon another ſuppoſition; and let me now, for argument ſake, wave what I have been ſo long inſiſting upon, and ſuppoſe, that you could ſo far command the turbulent paſſions of your own heart, and ſo unite (as it were) the whole powers of your ſoul, to attend to the beauty of place, the harmony of muſic, and whatever elſe may be ſuppoſed capable of regaling the ſenſes or the imagination,

(1) 2 Cor. iv. 17. (2) 2 Cor. v. 1. (3) 1 Pet. i. 4.

as upon the whole, to find heaven a pleasing and delightful abode, and to wish, that though some of its entertainments were above your taste and capacity, yet you might be allowed an eternal enjoyment of the rest: could there be any room for you to expect a perpetual abode in these blissful seats? No, sinners, you would not be able so much as to hope it. The good itself is so great, and perpetual enjoyment, even in any degree, has such a kind of infinite value, that I know not how the purest and noblest spirits in heaven could absolutely have been secure of it, separate from the engagement of a Divine promise. And what Divine promise would you be able to have recourse to in such a circumstance as we now suppose? Where could you find it in all the book of God, that persons of your character should ever enter into heaven at all, much less that you should forever continue there?—You could have therefore no security of the continuance of your abode in heaven, if it were possible that you should enter on the possession of it: but when you should consider the unsullied holiness of the ever blessed God, the sovereign of this sacred province, and the spotless purity of that gracious Redeemer, to whom the government of it is committed, you could not but fear, that you should quickly be seized by the hand of vengeance, be hurled from the battlements of heaven, and plunged low into the pit of destruction. You know this was the condemnation of the rebel angels, and your guilt, compared with that dreadful event, which makes so considerable a scene of the history of heaven, would, I doubt not, be sufficient to create everlasting jealousy and uneasiness, and to turn every pleasurable circumstance into a source of horror, in the apprehensions of being deprived eternally of it.

Thus you see, Sirs, from a particular survey of the various lights in which heaven is represented, and of the various branches of which its happiness consists, an unregenerate sinner is incapable of it, even though we would suppose that he was actually admitted to it. Let me entreat you to reflect on all these things, and you will see the reasonableness of that one remark with which I shall conclude this discourse, viz.

How vain are all thoſe hopes of heaven, which in your preſent condition you are ready to entertain!

I have been proving at large, that if God were to admit you to the poſſeſſion of heaven, which it is certain he never will, you would be incapable of reliſhing the enjoyments of it: nay, that there would be a ſolid foundation in your own hearts, for many of the moſt tumultuous and diſquieting paſſions. Envy and grief, fear and rage, thoſe roots of bitterneſs, would ſpring up even in the Paradiſe of God, and turn the fertility of that bleſſed ſoil into their own nouriſhment. And do you imagine that any external accommodations or ornaments could make you eaſy and comfortable, under the tranſports of ſuch helliſh paſſions? What if you were to take a man that was tormented with a violent fit of the ſtone or gout, and to place him in a moſt delicious garden, or in a palace of marble and cedar, to ſet him on a throne of gold under a canopy of purple, to clothe him with robes of velvet and embroidery, regaling him with the moſt delicious fruits and generous wines, and at the ſame time ſoothing his ear with all the harmony of ſound, which the moſt melodious ſymphony of inſtruments and voices could afford? Would all this magnificence and luxury make him inſenſible of that anguiſh which was racking his very vitals? or would not that inward torture rather render him inſenſible of this aſſociation of pleaſurable impreſſions from without? Yea, would it not incline him to ſuſpect, that you intended all theſe pompous preparations only to deride and inſult him? As little would your diſtempered and unholy ſouls be capable of reliſhing the entertainments of heaven, while theſe entertainments and theſe ſouls of yours, continue what they are at preſent.

There muſt be therefore a change: and will you conſider where that change muſt be made? If you continue ſtill in your preſent character and circumſtances, there muſt be a vaſt change in heaven itſelf, before you can be happy in it. The whole temper, character, and diſpoſition of every ſaint and angel there, muſt be changed from what it now is, before they can be capable of any friendly and complacential converſation with you. Yea, our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who is *the ſame yeſterday, to-day, and*

forever (1), muſt diveſt himſelf of thoſe beauties of holineſs, which are infinitely dearer to him than any external grandeur or authority, before he can receive you into his kingdom. Nay, the very *Father of lights, with whom there is no variableneſs, neither ſhadow of turning* (2), muſt be entirely changed. He muſt lay aſide that holineſs which is eſſential to his nature, and which is the brightneſs and glory of it: he muſt love that which he now hates, and be indifferent to that which he moſt affectionately loves, before he can open his arms to you, and ſmile upon your ſouls. And can you dare to hope for ſuch an unaccountable, ſuch an inconceivable revolution as this? No, Sirs, infinitely ſooner would God change earth into hell, and bury you, and all of your character, under the ruins of this world, which you inhabit and pollute, than he would thus tarniſh the beauties of heaven, and diveſt himſelf of the brighteſt glory of his own divinity. "God," ſays Archbiſhop Tillotſon, "has condeſcended to take our nature upon him, that he might make us capable of happineſs; but if this will not do, he will not put off his own nature to make us happy."

What then do you imagine? Do you think that God will prepare ſome ſeparate apartments in heaven, furniſhed with a variety of ſenſual pleaſures, for the entertainment of perſons of your character? ſome apartments from whence the tokens of his preſence ſhall be withdrawn, from whence the exerciſe of his worſhip ſhall be baniſhed, from whence ſaints and angels ſhall retire to make way for thoſe inhabitants, who, like you, have ſinned themſelves beyond a capacity of enjoying God, or of being fit companions for any of his moſt excellent creatures? This were to ſuppoſe the Chriſtian religion falſe, and to contradict the light of natural reaſon too, which not only ſhews ſuch a diſpoſition of things to be unworthy the Divine ſanctity and majeſty, but alſo ſhews that if there be a future ſtate, it muſt be a ſtate of miſery to wicked men, in whoſe minds thoſe vicious habits prevail, which are even now the beginnings of hell; which therefore they muſt carry along with them

(1) Heb. xiii. 8. (2) Jam. i. 17.

wherever they are, in proportion to the degree in which they are predominant.

Upon the whole then, you must evidently see that it is absolutely necessary that you, sinners, should be changed, if ever you expect to have any part or lot in the future happiness. And when do you expect that change should be wrought? Do you expect it when death has done its dreadful office upon you, and your soul arrives at the invisible world? Is the air of it (if I may be allowed the expression) so refined that it will immediately purify, and transform every polluted sinner that comes into it? You cannot but know, that the whole tenor of Scripture forbids that presumptuous, destructive hope. It assures us that *there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave* (1); but that we must be *judged according to what we have done in the body*, and not according to what has past in any separate state, *whether* the actions we have done be *good, or* whether they be *evil* (2).

If ever therefore you are regenerate at all, it must be while you are here below, in this state of education and trial: and if you continue in your sins till death surprise you, your souls will be forever sealed up under an irreversible sentence, and by the decree of God, and the constitution of things, will be excluded from happiness, as by no means either entitled to it, or prepared for it. So evident is the truth of this assertion in the text, that *except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

And will you then sit down contentedly under such a conclusion as this, "I shall be excluded from this kingdom, as accursed and profane?" Alas, Sirs, the conclusion is big with unutterable terror and death; as I should now proceed to shew you at large if my time would allow: for I am next to represent the infinite importance of entering into that kingdom, and consequently of that entire change which has been proved to be necessary to that entrance. But I must reserve that to the next opportunity of this kind. In the mean time let me add, that I doubt not but there are many present, who have heard this description of the heavenly world with delight, and who are saying in their hearts, "*This is my rest*

(1) Eccl. ix. 10. (2) 2 Cor. v. 10.

forever: here will I dwell, for I have desired it (1): This is the felicity to which my heart aspires with the most ardent breathing." Such may with the utmost reason regard it as a token for good, and may go on in a cheerful assurance, that the grace that has *made them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light* (2), will at length conduct them to it, in perfect safety and everlasting triumph. *Amen.*

(1) Psal. cxxxii. 14. (2) Col. i. 12.

SERMON VI.

OF THE IMPORTANCE OF ENTERING INTO THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

JOHN iii. 3.

———*Except a man be born again he cannot ſee the kingdom of GOD.*

HOW impoſſible it is that an unregenerate ſinner ſhould ſee, i. e. enjoy the kingdom of God, or that future bleſſedneſs to which the goſpel is intended to lead its profeſſors, I have ſhewn you at large. I have appealed to the teſtimony of God's holy prophets, and apoſtles, in concurrence with that of his incarnate Son, to prove that perſons of ſuch a character are, by the inviolable conſtitution of that kingdom, excluded from it. And I have further in my laſt diſcourſe, proved, that if they were actually admitted to it, they would be incapable of reliſhing its pleaſures: that their vitiated palate would have a diſtaſte to the choiceſt fruits of the Paradiſe of God; yea, that in theſe bliſsful regions thorns and briars would ſpring up in their paths, and make them wretched in the very ſeat of happineſs.

I doubt not, but you are in your conſciences generally convinced, that the truth of theſe things cannot be conteſted. You are inwardly perſuaded that it is indeed ſo; and I fear many of you have alſo reaſon to apprehend, that you are of this unhappy number, who are

hitherto ſtrangers to regenerating grace. But how are your minds impreſſed with this apprehenſion? Do I wrong you, Sirs, when I ſuſpect that ſome of them are hardly impreſſed at all? Do I wrong you when I ſuſpect there are thoſe of you, who have ſpent the laſt week with very little reflection upon what you have heard? The cares and amuſements of life have been purſued as before, and you have not taken one hour to enter into the thought with ſelf-application, and ſeriouſly to conſider, "I am one of thoſe concerning whom eternal wiſdom and truth has pronounced, that, if they continue ſuch as at preſent they are, they *ſhall not ſee the kingdom of God.*" You have not paused at all upon the awful thought; you have not offered one lively petition to God, to beg that you may be recovered from this unhappy ſtate, and brought to a meetneſs for his kingdom, and a title to it. For your ſakes therefore, and for the ſakes of others in your ſtate, having already explained, illuſtrated, and confirmed the propoſition in my text, I proceed,

III. To repreſent to you the importance of the argument ſuggeſted here; or to ſhew you, how much every unregenerate ſinner ought to be alarmed to hear, that while he continues in his preſent ſtate, *he cannot ſee the kingdom of God.*

And oh! that while I endeavour to illuſtrate this, my words might enter into your minds *as goads*, and might fix there *as nails faſtened in a ſure place!* The ſubſtance of my argument is *given forth by* the *one* great *ſhepherd* (1); may the proſecution of it be bleſſed, as the means of reducing ſome wandering ſheep into his fold.

Now in order to illuſtrate the force of this argument, I beſeech you ſeriouſly to conſider,—what this kingdom is, from which you are in danger of being forever excluded;——and what will be the condition of all thoſe, who ſhall be finally cut off from any intereſt in it.

[1.] Conſider "what that kingdom is, from which the unregenerate, or thoſe who are **not born again**, ſhall be excluded.

(1) Eccleſ. xii. 11.

And here you are not to expect a complete representation of it: for that is an attempt in which the tongues of angels, as well as men, might fail; or how proper soever their language might be in itself, to us it would be unintelligible: for *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him* (1). And surely these final and most illustrious preparations of his love must, beyond all others, exceed our description and conception. A minister, that, with the apostle Paul, had been *caught up into the third heaven*, if he would attempt to speak of the glorious scenes which were there opened to him, must say, they were *unutterable things* (2): and one, that with John, had *lain in the bosom of Christ* himself must say, as that Apostle did, *It does not yet appear what we shall be* (3). And indeed, when we go about to discourse of it, I doubt not but the blessed angels pity the weakness of our apprehensions and expressions, and know that we do but debase the subject, when we attempt the most to exalt and adorn it.

Yet there are just and striking representations of this kingdom made in the word of God; and we are there often told in general, wherein it shall consist. You no doubt remember that I was, in the last of these Lectures, going over several important views of it. I then told you, it will consist in the perfection of our souls in knowledge and holiness; in the sight of God, and our blessed Redeemer; in exercising the most delightful affections towards them, and in being forever employed in rendering them the most honourable services; in conversing with saints and glorious angels; and in the assured expectation of the eternal continuance of this blessedness in all its branches. That this is the scriptural representation of the matter, I proved to you from many express testimonies in the word of God; and I doubt not, but you have often heard the excellency of each of these views represented at large, in distinct discourses on each.

I will not therefore now repeat what has been said upon such occasions; but will rather direct you to some general considerations, which may convince you of the

(1) 1 Cor. ii. 9. (2) 2 Cor. xii. 2, 4. (3) 1 John iii. 2.

excellency of that ſtate and world, from which, if you continue unregenerate, you muſt forever be excluded: for I would fain fix it upon your minds, that it is in this connexion, and for this purpoſe, that the repreſentation is made. And oh! that you might ſo review it, as no longer to *neglect ſo great ſalvation* (1), nor act as if you *judged* ſuch *everlaſting life* to be beneath your attention, and *unworthy* your care and regard (2)! You cannot think it ſo when you conſider,—that it is repreſented in Scripture under the moſt magnificent images;—that it is the ſtate which God has prepared for the diſplay of his glory, and the entertainment of his moſt favourite creatures;——that it is the great purchaſe of the blood of his eternal Son;——that it is the main work of his ſacred Spirit to prepare men's hearts for it;—and the great buſineſs of our inveterate enemy, the devil, by all poſſible means, to prevent our obtaining it.——Each of theſe conſiderations may much illuſtrate the excellency of it, and all taken together yield a moſt convincing demonſtration.

1. Conſider, "by what a variety of beautiful and magnificent images this happineſs is repreſented in the word of God;" and that may convince you of its excellency.

When the bleſſed God himſelf would raiſe our conceptions of a ſtate of being, ſo much ſuperior to any thing we have ever ſeen or known, unleſs he intended a perſonal and miraculous revelation of it, he muſt borrow our language, and in painting the glory of heaven muſt take his colours from earth. And here the magnificence of a city, the ſweetneſs of a garden, the ſolemn pomp of a temple, the luſtre of a crown, and the dignity of a kingdom, ſtrike powerfully on the human mind, and fill it with veneration and delight. But when ſuch figures as theſe are borrowed from this low world of ours, faintly to ſhadow out that which is above, there is always the addition of ſome important circumſtance, to intimate how far the celeſtial original exceeds the bright-

(1) Heb. ii. 3. (2) Acts xiii. 46.

eſt earthly glory, by which the Divine condeſcenſion has vouchſafed to deſcribe it.

The enumeration of a variety of ſcriptural deſcriptions will ſet theſe remarks in the ſtrongeſt light.——If therefore heaven be deſcribed as a city, it is *the New Jeruſalem, the city of our God, that cometh down from God out of heaven* (1); the pavement of its *ſtreets* is all of *pure gold*, its *gates* are *pearl*, and its *foundations jewels* (2).——If it be a garden, it is the *Paradiſe of God* (3), and ſo far ſuperior to that which he at firſt prepared and furniſhed out for the entertainment of Adam in his ſtate of innocence, that it is *planted on every ſide* with *the tree of life* (4), of which there was but one alone in the garden of Eden: and is watered, not with ſuch common rivers as the Tigris and Euphrates, but with that living, copious, inexhauſted ſtream, *the river of the water of life*, which *proceeds from the throne of God* (5), and gently glides along through all its borders.——When it is repreſented as a temple, we are told that inſtead of a golden ark placed in the remoteſt receſs, to which only the high prieſt might once a year approach, and on which he might not be allowed to gaze, the *throne of God* is erected *there* (6), perpetually ſurrounded with myriads of worſhippers who *ſee his face, and* like the high prieſt when clothed in his richeſt robes, *have his name* written *in their foreheads* (7): inſtead of the feeble rays of that golden candleſtick, whoſe lamps ſhone in the holy place, the heavenly temple is illuminated in a more glorious manner, *and needs no candle, neither light of the ſun, for the glory of God* continually *enlightens it, and the Lamb is the light thereof* (8): Nay, we are aſſured that its ſacred *miniſters are made kings* as well as *prieſts unto God* (9); and accordingly being *clothed in white raiment*, they have *crowns of gold on their heads* (10); as well as *harps and golden vials*, or cenſers *full of incenſe in their hands* (11): and leſt we ſhould think theſe pompous ſervices are only the entertainments of ſome peculiarly ſacred ſeaſons, we are told that *they reſt not day nor night* (12), adoring *him that*

(1) Rev. iii. 12. xxi. 2. (2) Rev. xxi. 19, 21. (3) Rev. ii. 7.
(4) Rev. xxii. 2. (5) Rev. xxii. 1. (6) Rev. vii. 15.
(7) Rev. xxii. 4. (8) Rev. xxi. 23. xxii. 5. (9) Rev. i. 6.
(10) Rev. iv. 4. (11) Rev. v. 8. (12) Rev. iv. 8.

ſits upon the throne, and are fixed as *pillars in* his *temple, to go out no more* (1).—Again, if it be ſpoken of as a crown, it is repreſented as *incorruptible* (2); *a crown of glory that fadeth not away* (3).——And when it is called a kingdom, the Scripture does not only add, as here in the text, that it is *the kingdom of God*, which muſt certainly exalt the idea of it; but that it is *a kingdom which cannot be moved* (4), an *everlaſting kingdom* (5): nay, to carry our thoughts to the higheſt degree of dignity and glory, it is ſpoken of as a *ſitting down with Chriſt on his throne* (6).

But further, the value of theſe illuſtrious repreſentations is much enhanced, if we conſider the character of the perſons by whom they are made. They were perſons well acquainted with theſe things, having received their information from a Divine Revelation, and from the immediate viſions of God. They were alſo perſons of ſuch ſublime and elevated ſentiments, that they had a ſovereign contempt for all the enjoyments of time and ſenſe, even thoſe which the generality of mankind ſet the greateſt value upon: *and counted all things but loſs for the knowledge of Chriſt* (7), *and the teſtimony of a good conſcience* (8), while they *looked not at temporal, but at eternal things* (9). They could deliberately, conſtantly, and even cheerfully reſign all the riches, and honours, and carnal pleaſures, which they might have purchaſed by their apoſtaſy from religion; and were ready to embrace bonds, impriſonments, or death itſelf, when it met them in the way of their duty.——Now certainly a glory, with which ſuch holy, wiſe and heroic perſons were ſo paſſionately enamoured, and which they deſcribe with ſuch pathos of language, and ſuch extacy of delight, while they were trampling with ſo generous a diſdain on every thing which earth calls good and great, muſt deſerve our very attentive regard. And this it yet more evidently will appear to do, if we conſider,

2. "It is the ſtate and world, which God has prepared for the diſplay of his glory, and the entertainment of the moſt favoured of his creatures."

(1) Rev. iii. 12. (2) 1 Cor. ix. 25. (3) 1 Pet. v. 4.
(4) Heb. xii. 28. (5) 2 Pet. i. 11. (6) Rev. iii. 21.
(7) Phil. iii. 8. (8) 2 Cor. i. 12. (9) 2 Cor. iv. 18.

This argument seems to be hinted at, when it is said, (as in the place I referred to before) *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him* (1). God well knows the capacity of his creatures, and how much happiness they are able and fit to receive; and he can fill their capacities to the utmost: nay, he can farther enlarge them to what degree he pleases, that they may admit superior degrees of glory and felicity. A happiness, therefore, which he has prepared on purpose to display the riches of his magnificence and love, and to shew what he can do to delight his creatures, must certainly be in some measure proportionable, if I may so express it, to the infinity of his own sacred perfections. Let us then seriously consider who God is; and attentively dwell in our meditation on the extent of his power, and the riches of his bounty; and our conception of the happiness of heaven must be raised to something more glorious, than the most emphatical words can perfectly describe.

And here, to assist our imagination in some degree, let us look round us, and take a survey of this visible world. This earth, how conveniently has he furnished it, how beautifully has he disposed it, how richly has he adorned it! What various and abundant provision has he made for the subsistence, the accommodation, and the entertainment of the creatures that inhabit it! and especially of man, in whom this scheme and system of things appears to centre, and to whom it is all most wisely and graciously referred! Yet earth is the habitation of a race of mean and degenerate creatures, who are but in a state of trial; nay, it is the habitation of thousands and ten thousands of God's incorrigible enemies, with whom *he is angry every day* (2). Already it is marked with some awful characters of the Divine displeasure; and the Scripture assures us, that it is *reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men* (3). Yet even this earth is not a spectacle unworthy our regard; nor can we, if we allow ourselves to survey it with becoming attention, behold it

(1) 1 Cor. ii. 9. (2) Psal. vii. 11. (3) 2 Pet. iii. 7.

without an affecting mixture of admiration, of love, and of joy: paſſions that will ſtrike us yet more powerfully, if from this earth of ours we raiſe our eyes to the viſible heavens; and there behold the glory of the ſun, the brightneſs of the moon, and all the numerous hoſts of heaven that attend in her train. Who that conſiders, with any degree of attention, their magnitude, their luſtre, their motion, and their influence, can forbear crying out, *Oh Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth, who haſt ſet thy glory above the heavens* (1)! And when, with even theſe in our view, we further reflect, that there is another apartment, as yet inviſible, of which this ſpangled firmament is but, as it were, the ſhining vail; an apartment, where the great Creator and Governor of all has fixed his ſtated reſidence, and erected the throne of his glory; even that throne which is forever ſurrounded by all the moſt holy and excellent of his creatures; we muſt be convinced, it is ſomething more beautiful, and more magnificent than this harmonious ſyſtem itſelf. And, methinks, when we have ſaid more beautiful and more magnificent than this, imagination is ready to fail us, and to leave the mind dazzled and overwhelmed with an effulgency of luſtre which it cannot delineate, and can ſcarce ſuſtain. Yet will our venerable apprehenſions of it be farther aſſiſted, if we conſider,

3. That the kingdom of heaven is "the great purchaſe of the blood of God's only begotten Son;" and therefore to be ſure it muſt be inconceivably valuable.

If you are at all acquainted with your Bibles, you muſt know that we are by ſin in a ſtate of *alienation from God* (2); that we had forfeited all our title to his love, and ſtood juſtly expoſed to his ſevere diſpleaſure; and that it is *Jeſus who delivered us from the wrath to come* (3). Now if we owe it to his merit and atonement *that we live* (4), much more are we to aſcribe it to him, if we are raiſed to any ſuperior degree of happineſs. If God could not, with honour to his juſtice, have ſuffered us, without ſuch a propitiation, to have paſſed off with im-

(1) Pſal. viii. 1. (2) Epheſ. iv. 18. (3) 1 Theſſ. i. 10.
(4) 1 John iv. 9.

punity; much leſs could he, without it, have received us to his embraces, and have advanced us to *ſit with him on his throne* (1). Accordingly it is ſaid of the bleſſed martyrs in the heavenly world, even of thoſe who had ſo glorioufly diſtinguiſhed their fidelity and zeal, and *loved not their lives unto the death* (2); that they had *waſhed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb* (3); and they gratefully acknowledge it in their hymns of praiſe, that *Chriſt had redeemed them to God by his blood, and had made them kings and prieſts unto God* (4).

Now let us ſeriouſly reflect, and conſider what this blood of the Lamb is. The apoſtle Peter tells us, that *ſilver and gold*, and all the peculiar treaſures of kings and princes, are but *corruptible things* (5), or periſhing and worthleſs trifles, when compared with it. And no wonder it is repreſented in ſuch exalted language, when we conſider it was the blood of the only begotten Son of God, who is *the brightneſs of* his father's *glory, and the expreſs image of his perſon* (6), and indeed *one with him* (7), being poſſeſſed of a nature truly and properly divine; ſo that it is called *the blood of God* (8). We may well argue, even from theſe tranſient ſurveys, that it was ſome important happineſs, which he came to procure at ſo expenſive a rate. Had an angel been ſent down from heaven, we ſhould naturally have concluded, it muſt have been upon ſome momentous errand: ſurely then, when the Lord of angels comes down, not only to live on earth, but to expire in bitter agonies on the croſs, to purchaſe a benefit for us, we may be well aſſured, that this benefit muſt be very conſiderable. Our Lord Jeſus Chriſt muſt certainly ſet a very great value upon it, or he would not have purchaſed it at ſuch a price: and we are ſure, the value that he apprehended in it muſt be its true value. He could not be impoſed upon by any falſe appearance of glory and ſplendour: he deſpiſed, with a juſt and generous contempt, *all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them* (9): and he was alſo well acquainted with the celeſtial kingdom, having ſo long

(1) Rev. iii. 21. (2) Rev. xii. 11. (3) Rev. vii. 14.
(4) Rev. v. 9, 10. (5) 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. (6) Heb. i. 3.
(7) John x. 30. (8) Acts xx. 28. (9) Mat. iv. 8, 10.

dwelt in it, and so long presided over it: yet so highly does he esteem it, that he speaks of it upon all occasions, as the highest possible gift of Divine bounty, the richest preparation and noblest contrivance of Divine love: yea, he regards it as a felicity so great, that when he conducts his people into it, with the last solemn pomp of the judgment-day, it is said, *he shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied* (1), allowing it to be a just equivalent for all he has done, and all he has suffered in so glorious a cause.

4. The excellency of the heavenly kingdom will further appear, if we consider, that "it is the main work of the Spirit of God upon men's hearts, to prepare them for an admittance into it."

You well know, that the blessed Spirit of God is spoken of as that Divine Agent, by whom *all the hosts of heaven were created*, and all God's various works produced (2); and it is *he* that *knows the things of God* even as *the human spirit knows the things of a man* (3). Now it is his peculiar office in the economy of our redemption, to form the soul to a meetness for glory. Accordingly, when the apostle Paul had been reminding the Corinthians, that while they continued in their sinful state, they were unfit for the kingdom of God, he adds, *But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God* (4).

That the Spirit should condescend to engage at all in such a work, must give us a very sublime idea of the end at which it aims. But much more will that idea be raised, when we consider with what a variety, and what a constancy of operations he begins, continues, and perfects it. He attempts it, (as we shall hereafter more particularly shew you) sometimes by convictions of terror, and sometimes by insinuations of love; and by one method or another, in the hearts of all the heirs of this glory, he works so great a change, that it is represented by *turning a heart of stone into a heart of flesh* (5), by *raising the dead from their graves* (6), yea, by *producing a new*

(1) Isa. liv. 11. (2) Job xxxiii. 4. Ps. xxxiii. 6. (3) 1 Cor. ii. 11. (4) 1 Cor. vi. 11. (5) Ezek. xxxvi. 26. (6) Ezek. xxxvii. 13. Eph. ii. 5, 6.

creation (1). For this does he watch over the ſoul with the tendereſt care, and continues his friendly offices, to recover it from relapſes, and gradually to form it to advancing degrees of ſanctity, till at length it be enabled to *perfect holineſs in the fear of God* (2). Nay, ſo intent is this Sacred Agent on the important work, that when ſinners moſt inſolently and ungratefully reject him, and by reſiſting him oppoſe their own happineſs, he does not immediately leave them; he ſtrikes them again and again; and waits upon them for ſucceeding days, and months, and years: and when, perhaps, *the ſincere convert* makes the moſt *ungrateful return* for the experience of his goodneſs, even after he has acknowledged, and at length obeyed it: when under the fatal tranſport of ſome ungoverned paſſion, and the influence of ſome ſtrong temptation, he acts as if he were intent upon tearing down the work of the Spirit of God upon his ſoul, and driving him forever away; yet in how many inſtances does he return again after all theſe injuries, pleading the cauſe of God with a ſweetly prevailing eloquence, and thus healing the wound, and repairing the breach, and making it perhaps ſtronger than before! And all this, for what? That the happy ſubject of all theſe kind operations may be formed to a fitneſs for the kingdom of heaven.—And are we to regard this bleſſed Spirit as an unmeaning agent, or as incapable of judging of the importance of this end for which he acts? Is that almighty energy of his employed in an inſignificant manner? Surely Nicodemus, ſlow of underſtanding as he was, muſt apprehend the *importance of entering into the kingdom of heaven*, when he heard, that in order to be admitted to it, *a man muſt be born of the Spirit*. And let me add once more,

5. That the excellency of the heavenly kingdom may further be argued "from the eagerneſs with which the enemy of ſouls is endeavouring to prevent our entrance into it."

You know the devil is always repreſented as the inveterate enemy of our happineſs. His rage is expreſſed

(1) 2 Cor. v. 17. Eph. ii. 10. (2) 2 Cor. vii. 1.

By that of *a roaring lion, that walks about, seeking whom he may devour* (1): and with unwearied diligence he is continually employed in forming and pursuing his temptations: And this is the grand design of all, that he may exclude us from the promised felicity. While sinners are in their unregenerate state, he endeavours to engage all their regards to the objects of time and sense; and for that purpose he continually presents them with a variety of entertainments and amusements suited to their respective tempers and circumstances. If they are awakened to any serious concern about their eternal salvation, he uses his utmost address to divert their minds from an attendance to it: and for this purpose he displays before them all the allurements of sin in its most engaging forms, and if they are not captivated with these, he often puts on a face of terror, and endeavours to affright them from religion by the most gloomy representations of it, or by horrible and distracting suggestions, "that it is now forever too late to attain it." Or if Divine Grace surmount all this opposition, and the sinner resolutely chooses his portion in heaven, and puts his soul into the hands of Christ to be conducted to it; the malice of Satan pursues him even to that sacred retreat, which he has sought in the arms of his Saviour: and if he cannot prevent the soul from entering into heaven, he will at least labour to bring it into such a state of negligence, and to seduce it into those delays and relapses, which may divert its regards to that blessed world, which may cloud its evidences of it, and may at least, as much as possible, diminish the degree of its glory there.

Now permit me, in this instance, to turn the artillery of this cunning enemy against himself, and to argue the excellency of this kingdom, from the zeal and attachment with which he endeavours to obstruct your attaining it. Though Satan be now a very degenerate creature, he was once an angel of light, and still retains much of the knowledge, though he has lost the rectitude and integrity of the angelic nature. And he particularly knows what heaven is, because he was once an inhabi-

(1) 1 Pet. v. 8.

tant there; and while he is endeavouring to perſuade the ſinner to prefer earth before it, he does, by that very endeavour, inconteſtibly prove, that he himſelf knows the contrary, and is fully apprized that there is nothing here to be compared with the felicity of the future ſtate. And therefore while he ſeeks the deſtruction of the ſoul, he can leave it in the enjoyment of all its worldly proſperity; nay, he will attempt to lead him into methods, by which this proſperity may be promoted and increaſed.

And thus, Sirs, I have endeavoured a little to repreſent to you, what this kingdom of heaven is, from which we are aſſured that unconverted ſinners ſhall forever be excluded. I have argued its excellency—from the repreſentations which are made of it in the word of God—from its being the preparation of Divine love—from its being the purchaſe of a Redeemer's blood—and the end to which, on the one hand, the glorious operations of the bleſſed Spirit lead—and of which, on the other hand, all the ſtratagems and aſſaults of the prince of darkneſs are intended to deprive us.—If, therefore, there be truth in Scripture, if there be wiſdom in heaven, or policy in hell, it muſt ſurely be infinitely important. And will any of you be ſuch mean-ſpirited creatures, as, when this happineſs is propoſed to you, baſely to relinquiſh the purſuit of it, and to ſacrifice this bleſſed hope to any periſhing trifle of mortal life. Surely it would be madneſs; though nothing more were to be apprehended than the loſs of it; and though, when heaven were loſt, all that earth can give ſhould remain, if not to counterbalance the loſs, yet at leaſt to make you leſs ſenſible of it. But the weight of the argument will much more evidently appear, if you conſider,

[2.] What will at laſt become of all thoſe who are excluded from this heavenly kingdom.

And here I beſeech you to aſk your own conſciences, whether they be not inwardly perſuaded,—that thoſe who are excluded from heaven, will remain in a ſtate of exiſtence, in which they will be ever ſenſible of their loſs,—and will be delivered over by Divine vengeance into that ſeat of torment, which God has prepared for the

punishment of his implacable and incorrigible enemies.—This many of you do undoubtedly believe of such persons in general; believe it, therefore, of yourselves, if you are, and continue, in an unregenerate state.

1. "You will still continue in a state of existence, in which you will be ever sensible of your loss."

It might afford some wretched kind of consolation to you, if, as soon as you died out of this world, your being or your apprehensive powers were immediately to cease. Then the loss of heaven would only be an affliction to you in your dying moments, when you saw the enjoyments of earth were come to an end, and that you must have no part in any future happiness. But alas, Sirs, you cannot but know that when your bodies are dead, and consumed in their graves, your thinking faculties will still be continued to you: and oh, that you would seriously reflect, how they will then be employed! You will then be thinking what you have done in life, what you have chosen for your happiness, and what has been the consequence of that choice. You will look round in vain for such accommodations and pleasures as you were once most fond of: but they will be no more; and when you perceive them vanished, like the visionary amusements of a dream, you will lift up your astonished eyes towards the regions of glory. And you indeed will have a lively view of them: but to what purpose will that view serve? Only through the righteous vengeance of God to aggravate your misery and despair. "Alas," will you think "there are millions of creatures yonder in heaven, who are rejoicing in the sight and favour of God, and are as full of happiness as their natures can contain, and shall be so forever; while I am cut off from all share in the Divine bounty. Rivers of pleasure are flowing in upon them, while not one drop is sent down to me; nor could I obtain it, though I were to ask the favour from the least of Christ's servants there. I am cast out as an accursed wretch, with whom God and his holy and blessed creatures will have no farther intercourse, or communion: and why am I thus cast out? and why am I thus cut off from God's favour, and driven from his presence, while so many that dwelt with me on earth are admitted to it?

My nature was originally as capable of happineſs as theirs: and though it was ſadly degenerate, it might, like theirs, have been renewed. God was once offering me that grace, by which my diſordered ſoul might have been transformed, and I might have been fitted for the regions of glory: but I deſpiſed all theſe offers, and gave the preference to thoſe fading vanities, which, alas! have forever forſaken me. And now *they that were ready are gone in* to the delightful banquet, *and the door is ſhut* (1); the everlaſting gates are ſhut forever, and barred againſt me. And here I muſt lie at this miſerable diſtance, envying and raging at their happineſs, of which, whatever ſight or knowledge I may have of it, I muſt never, never, never partake!"

Such reflections as theſe, Sirs, will cut deep into your ſouls; and accordingly our Lord declares to impenitent ſinners in his own days, *There ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of teeth, when you ſee* others *ſitting down in the kingdom of God, and you yourſelves thruſt out* (2). And if you would reflect, you might eaſily apprehend this. How would you be enraged at yourſelves, if by your folly you had neglected ſecuring a plentiful eſtate, when is was offered to you on the moſt eaſy terms; and you actually ſaw others, once your equals, and perhaps your inferiors, in the poſſeſſion of it, in conſequence of having taken thoſe methods which you ſtupidly neglected? the reflection, I doubt not, would very much impair the pleaſure you might find in other comfortable and agreeable circumſtances. How much more inſupportable then will the loſs of heaven appear to you, when you come to ſee, and know, what it is you have loſt, and have nothing to relieve or ſupport you, under the painful recollection?

It is to no purpoſe to object, that upon the principles of my laſt diſcourſe, there will be no room to lament your excluſion from thoſe entertainments, which you would be incapable of reliſhing if you were admitted to them: for you will then ſee, and lament that incapacity as a very great miſery. As if a man, who was naturally fond of feaſting and mirth, ſhould ſee a great many regaling themſelves, and revelling about him, while he

(1) Mat. xxv. 10. (2) Luke xiii. 28.

was languishing under some painful distemper, which made him incapable of joining in the entertainment; he would yet grieve that he had no part in it: and it would be the increase, rather than the alleviation of his uneasiness, that it was his sickness which unfitted him for it; especially if, as in your case, it was a sickness, which he had brought upon himself by his own folly, and for which he had been offered an easy, pleasant, and infallible remedy, which he had refused to use till the malady was grown utterly incurable. One would imagine, this thought would be enough to impress you; but if it do not, let me entreat, and even charge you, to consider,

2. That if you are excluded from the kingdom of heaven, "you will be consigned over to those regions of darkness, despair, and misery, which God has prepared for those unhappy criminals, who are the objects of his final displeasure, and whom he will render everlasting monuments of his wrath."

There is something in human nature, that starts back at the thought of annihilation with strong reluctance: and yet how many thousands are there in this miserable world, who would with all their souls fly to it as a refuge! *They shall seek death*, as an inspired writer strongly expresses it, *and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them* (1). I will not attempt to enter into a detail of the horrors, attending the place and state, into which all who are excluded from the glories of the heavenly world shall be cast, and in which they shall be fixed. Let that one awful Scripture suffice for a specimen of many more; in which we are told, that *every one whose name was not found written in the book of life*, (or who was not registered in the number of those, who were to inhabit the New Jerusalem, or the kingdom of heaven) *was cast into the lake of fire* (2), or, as it is afterwards expressed, *into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone* (3). Think of this, and ask your own hearts, you that are so impatient of the little evils of mortal life, whether you can endure to take up your abode forever in devouring

(1) Rev. ix. 6. (2) Rev. xx. 15. (3) Rev. xxi. 8.

fire, or whether you can *dwell with everlaſting burnings* (1)? Yet theſe are the images by which the word of God repreſents it; to be plunged as in a ſea of liquid fire, whoſe flames are exaſperated and heightened, by being fed with brimſtone; nay, as the Prophet ſpeaks, by a copious ſtream of brimſtone, ſo expreſsly appointed by God himſelf, that this, as well as *the river of the water of life*, is repreſented as *proceeding* immediately from him: *he has made Tophet deep and large: the pile thereof is fire and much wood, and the breath of the Lord, like a ſtream of brimſtone, does kindle it* (2).

It is painful to a tender mind to think of this, as what its fellow-creatures are obnoxious to: it is grievous to ſpeak of it in theſe dreadful terms. But who are we, that we ſhould be more merciful than God? Or rather, how can we imagine it is mercy, to avoid ſpeaking of the appointment of infinite wiſdom, for the puniſhment of impenitent ſinners? What mercy were that, Sirs, to avoid to mention theſe terrors to you, and to neglect to warn you of them, becauſe they are great? which is indeed the very reaſon why the Scripture thus pathetically deſcribes them.

Away therefore with this fooliſh, this treacherous compaſſion, which chooſes rather to leave men to be conſumed, than to diſturb their ſlumbers! Think, Sirs, of that wretched glutton, whom Chriſt deſcribes as *lifting up his eyes in hell, being in torments; ſeeing* the regions of the bleſſed at an unapproachable diſtance, and *begging in vain* that *one drop of water* might be ſent *to cool his tongue*, amidſt all the raging thirſt with which he was *tormented in this flame* (3). Regard it attentively; for as God lives, and as your ſoul lives, if you continue in an unrenewed ſtate, you ſee in that wretch the very image and repreſentation of yourſelves. Yes, ſinners, I teſtify it to you this day, that intolerable as it ſeems, it will on that ſuppoſition be your own certain fate; or to ſpeak much more properly, your righteous, but inevitable doom. Heaven and earth will deſert you in that dreadful hour: or, if the inhabitants of both were to join to intercede for you, it would be in vain. Sentence will be paſt, and execution done: Hell will open its mouth to receive you,

(1) Iſa. xxxiii. 14. (2) Iſa. xxx. 33. (3) Luke xvi. 23, 24.

and ſhut it again forever to encloſe you, with thouſands, and ten thouſands more, among whom you will not find one to comfort you, but every one ready to afflict you. Then ſhall you know the value which God ſets upon his heavenly kingdom, by the judgments he inflicts upon you for neglecting and deſpiſing it; and then ſhall you know the importance of being born again, that only means by which Hell can be avoided, and Heaven ſecured.

And let me farther add, that conviction will quickly come in this terrible way, if you are not now prevailed upon to conſider theſe things; things which, if you have the leaſt regard to the word of God, you cannot but notionally believe. Do not then go about to annihilate (as it were) theſe proſpects to your mind, by placing them at a long diſtance. The diſtance is not ſo great as to deſerve a mention: The patience of God will not wait upon you for thouſands, or even hundreds of years: you have a few mortal days, in which to conſider of the matter; or rather, you have the preſent moment to conſider of it. And if you improve the opportunity, it is well; but if not, the juſt and uniform methods of the divine adminiſtration ſhall proceed, though it ſhould be to your ruin. God has vindicated the honours of his violated law, and deſpiſed goſpel, upon millions, who with the rebel-angels, by whom they have been ſeduced, are even now *reſerved in everlaſting chains under darkneſs, unto the judgment of the great day* (1); and he will as ſurely vindicate them upon you. *If you do not repent*, if you are not regenerate, *you ſhall all likewiſe periſh* (2), and not one of you ſhall eſcape.

And thus I cloſe this copious and important argument: this argument, in which life and death, ſalvation and damnation are concerned. View it, my friends, in all its connexion, and ſee in what part of it the chain can be broken. Will you ſay, that without regeneration you can ſecure an intereſt in the kingdom of heaven, though the conſtitution of heaven oppoſe it, and all the declarations of God's word ſtand directly againſt it; and though nature itſelf proclaim, and conſcience teſtify your incapacity to enjoy it? Or will you ſay, that being excluded from it, you ſhall ſuffer no conſiderable damage, though you loſe

(1) Jude, verſe 6. (2) Luke xiii. 3.

ſo glorious a ſtate, the nobleſt preparation of Divine love, the purchaſe of redeeming blood, and the end of the Spirit's operation on the ſoul; though you ever remain ſenſible of your loſs, and be conſigned over to dwell in that flaming priſon, which God has prepared for the devil and his angels, and where all the terrors of his righteous judgments are made known?

But if you are indeed inwardly convinced of the truth and importance of theſe things, and will go away, and act as before, without any regard to them, I can ſay no more. The reaſon of man, and the word of God can point out no ſtronger arguments, than an infinite good on the one hand, and an infinite evil on the other.

Hear, therefore, *Oh heavens, and give ear, O earth!* and let angels and devils join their aſtoniſhment; that creatures, who would ſtrenuouſly contend, and warmly exert themſelves, I will not ſay merely for an earthly kingdom, but in an affair where only a few pounds, or perhaps a few ſhillings or pence were concerned, are indifferent here, where, by their own confeſſion, a happy or miſerable eternity is in queſtion. For indifferent, I fear, ſome of you are and will continue. I have repreſented theſe things in the integrity of my heart, as in the ſight of God, not in artful forms of ſpeech, but in the genuine language, which the ſtrong emotions of my own ſoul, in the views of them, moſt naturally dictated. Yet I think it not at all improbable, that ſome of you, and ſome perhaps who do not now imagine it, will, as ſoon as you return home, divert your thoughts and diſcourſes to other objects; and may perhaps, as heretofore, lie down upon your beds without ſpending one quarter of an hour, or even one ſerious minute, in lamenting your miſerable ſtate before God, and ſeeking that help and deliverance which his grace alone can give. But if you thus lie down, make, if you can, *a covenant with death*, that it may not break in upon your ſlumbers; *and an agreement with hell* (1), that before the return of the morning, it may not flaſh in upon your careleſs ſouls another kind of conviction, than they will now receive from the voice of reaſon and the word of God.

(1) Iſa. xxviii. 15.

SERMON VII.

OF THE NECESSITY OF DIVINE INFLUENCES TO PRODUCE REGENERATION IN THE SOUL.

TITUS iii. 5, 6.

Not by works of righteouſneſs, which we have done, but according to his mercy he ſaved us, by the waſhing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghoſt; which he ſhed on us abundantly, through Jeſus Chriſt our Saviour.

IF my buſineſs were to explain and illuſtrate this Scripture at large, it would yield an ample field for accurate criticiſm and uſeful diſcourſe, and more eſpecially would lead us into a variety of practical remarks, on which it would be pleaſant to dilate in our meditations. It evidently implies, "that thoſe, who are the ſaved of the Lord, are brought to the practice of good works;" without which *faith is dead* (1), and all pretences to a ſaving change are not only vain, but inſolent. Yet it plainly teſtifies to us, "that our ſalvation, and acceptance with God, is not to be aſcribed to theſe, but to the Divine mercy; which mercy operates by ſanctifying our hearts, through the renewing influence of the Holy Spirit:" And "that there is an abundant effuſion of this Spirit under the Goſpel;" which is therefore, with great propriety, called *the miniſtration of the Spirit* (2), and the *law of the Spirit of life in Chriſt Jeſus* (3).

(1) James ii. 17. (2) 2 Cor. iii. 8. (3) Rom. viii. 2.

But I muſt neceſſarily, in purſuance of my general ſcheme, wave ſeveral of theſe remarks, that I may leave myſelf room to inſiſt on the grand topic I intend from the words.

I have already ſhewn you, who may be ſaid to be in an unregenerate ſtate: I have alſo deſcribed the change which regeneration makes in the ſoul; and have largely ſhewn you, in the three laſt Diſcourſes, the abſolute neceſſity and importance of it. And now I proceed,

Fourthly, To ſhew the *neceſſity* there is of the agency of the Divine power, in order to produce this great and important change.

This is ſtrongly implied in the words of the text: in which the Apoſtle, ſpeaking of the method God has been pleaſed to take for the diſplay of his goodneſs in the ſalvation and happineſs of fallen men, gives us this affecting view of it, that it is *not by works of righteouſneſs which we*, i. e. any of us Chriſtians, *have done, but according to his* free grace and *mercy* that *he* has *ſaved us, by the waſhing*, or (as it might be rendered) *the laver of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghoſt.*

I ſhall be ready to acknowledge, with the generality of ancient and modern interpreters, that baptiſm may probably here be called the laver of regeneration; God having appointed, that as new-born children are waſhed, ſo they, who by the influences of his grace on their hearts are born again, ſhould in token of their repentance for the ſins of their paſt life, be waſhed with baptiſmal water, ſuppoſing (which was here apparently the caſe in this early age of Chriſtianity) they had not received that ordinance in their infancy. Nevertheleſs, leſt any ſhould imagine, that an external ceremony was ſufficient, or that it was the chief thing intended, the Apoſtle takes the matter higher. And as the apoſtle Peter tells us, that the *baptiſm* which *ſaves us* is *not* merely *the putting away the filth of the fleſh, but the anſwer of a good conſcience towards God* (1); ſo the apoſtle Paul here adds, that we are ſaved *by the renewing of the Holy Ghoſt*: by which I can by no means underſtand ſomething entirely diſtinct from, and ſubſequent to his regenerating influences; for ac-

(1) 1 Pet. iii. 21.

cording to the view of regeneration ſtated in our former Diſcourſes, none can be regenerated who are not renewed: but it ſeems to explain the former clauſe, and to refer to the more poſitive effect produced by Divine grace on the ſoul, whereby Chriſtians are not only purified from ſin, but diſpoſed to, and quickened in, a courſe of holy obedience. And then he further tells us, that *this Spirit is the gift of God*, and is plentifully communicated to us in the name, and through the hands of the bleſſed Redeemer, *being ſhed on us abundantly by God, through Jeſus Chriſt our Saviour.*

Agreeably therefore to the general deſign and purport of theſe words, I ſhall go on to demonſtrate the abſolute neceſſity of a Divine agency and operation in this great work of our regeneration; which I ſhall do from a variety of topics. And here I ſhall ſtudiouſly wave many controverſies, with which the Chriſtian world has been afflicted, and the ſoundeſt part of it diſturbed, with relation to the kind and manner of this influence. I will not ſo much as mention them, and much leſs diſcuſs them; *leſt Satan ſhould take an advantage of us* (1), to divert our minds from what is eſſential in this doctrine, to what is merely circumſtantial. Only let it be obſerved in general, that I ſpeak of "ſuch an agency of God on our minds, as offers no violence to the rational and active nature which God has given us, nor does by any means ſuperſede our obligation to thoſe duties which his word requires; but on the contrary, cures and perfects our nature, and diſpoſes the ſoul to a regard to ſuch incumbent duties, and ſtrengthens it in the diſcharge of them." With this only preliminary, which appears to me highly important, I proceed to ſhew the reaſonableneſs of aſcribing this change to a Divine Agency, rather than to any thing elſe, which may be ſuppoſed to have any ſhare in producing it. And we may infer this,

[1.] "From the general and neceſſary dependence of the whole created world upon God."

There was a philoſophical, as well as Divine truth, in that obſervation of the apoſtle Paul at Athens, which was well worthy the moſt learned aſſembly; *In him*, i. e.

(1) 1 Cor. ii. 11.

in God, we live, and move, and have our being (1): Such is the innate weakneſs of created nature, that it continually depends on a Divine ſupport. The very idea of its being created, ſuppoſes that it had no cauſe of its exiſtence, but the Divine will, in the firſt moment of it; and if it could not then ſubſiſt without that will, in the firſt moment of its exiſtence, it neither could ſubſiſt without it in the ſecond, or in any future moment of it: ſince to have been dependent for a while, can never be ſuppoſed to render any thing for the future independent. The continued exiſtence then of all the creatures, no leſs of angels, than of worms, or trees, or ſtones, does properly depend upon the Divine energy which bears them up, and holds thoſe of them in life which live, and thoſe of them in being, which are inanimate, or without life.

And if their being be dependent, then ſurely it will follow, that all their perceptive and active powers, whatſoever they are, muſt continually depend upon God: for to exiſt with ſuch powers is evidently more than ſimply to exiſt; and if a Divine agency be neceſſary for the latter, much more muſt we allow it to be neceſſary for the former.

The human mind, therefore, with all its capacities and improvements, muſt acknowledge itſelf perpetually indebted to God, who is the fountain of truth and wiſdom, as well as of being: accordingly we are told, it is *he that teacheth man knowledge* (2). All the *ſkill of the huſbandman*, in one paſſage of Scripture (3), and all the *wiſdom of the artificer*, in another (4), is aſcribed to his influence: and if the improvement of the ſciences, and any other diſcovery, which renders human life in any degree more commodious and agreeable, is to be aſcribed to the Divine illumination and influence, then ſurely it is from hence this art of living wiſely and well muſt alſo be derived. All the views upon which good reſolutions are formed, all the ſtrong impreſſions upon the mind ariſing from theſe views, and all the ſteadineſs and determination of ſpirit, which does not only form ſuch purpoſes, but carries them into execution, are plainly the effect of

(1) Acts xvii. 28. (2) Pſal. xciv. 1. (3) Iſa. xxviii. 26.
(4) Exod. xxxvi. 1, 2.

the Divine agency on the mind; without which no ſecular affairs could be clearly underſtood, ſtrenuouſly purſued, or ſucceſsfully accompliſhed. And how peculiarly reaſonable it is, to apply this remark to the point now in view, will appear by attending,

[2.] To "the greatneſs and excellency of this change," which ſpeaks it aloud to be the Divine work.

I muſt, upon this occaſion, deſire you to recollect what I laid before you in ſeveral of the former diſcourſes. Think of the new light that breaks in upon the underſtanding; of the new affections that are enkindled in the heart; of the new reſolutions, by which the will is ſweetly and powerfully, though moſt freely influenced; and think of the degree of vigour attending theſe reſolutions, and introducing a ſeries of new labours and purſuits; and ſurely you muſt confeſs, that *it is the finger of God;* eſpecially when you conſider, how beautiful and excellent, as well as how great the work is.

Do we acknowledge, that it was the voice of God that firſt *commanded the light to ſhine out of darkneſs*, and that it was worthy of a Divine agency to produce ſo beautiful a creature as the ſun, to gild the whole face of our world, and to dreſs the different objects round us in ſuch a various and vivid aſſemblage of colours? And ſhall we not allow it to be much more worthy of him, to lighten up a benighted ſoul, and to reduce its chaos into harmony and order?——Was it worthy of God to form the firſt principles even of the vegetative life, in the loweſt plant or herb, and to viſit with refreſhing influences of the rain and ſun the earth wherein theſe ſeeds are ſown? And is it not much more worthy of him to implant the ſeed of the Divine life, and to nouriſh it from time to time by the influence of his Spirit? Did it ſuit the Divine wiſdom and mercy to provide for ſuſtaining our mortal lives, for healing our wounds, and recovering us from our diſeaſes? And ſhall it not much more ſuit him, to act as the great phyſician of ſouls, in reſtoring them to eaſe, to health, and vigour?

They muſt be dead indeed to all ſenſe of ſpiritual excellency, who do not ſee how much more illuſtriouſly God appears, when conſidered as the author of grace,

than merely as the author of nature. For indeed all the works of nature, and all the inſtances of Divine interpoſition to maintain its order and harmony, will chiefly appear valuable and important, when conſidered in ſubſerviency to the gracious deſign of recovering apoſtate man from the ruin of that degenerate ſtate, without which it had been far better for him never to have known being, and never to have inhabited a world ſo liberally furniſhed with a variety of good. And, therefore, I would appeal to every Chriſtian, whether he does not find a much more ardent gratitude glowing in his heart when he conſiders God as the author of the religious and divine, than merely of the animal or the rational life.

And permit me here to remark, that, agreeably to theſe reaſonings, ſome of the pagan philoſophers have ſaid very ſerious and remarkable things concerning the reality and the need of Divine influences on the mind, for the production of virtue and piety there. Thus Seneca, when he is ſpeaking of a reſemblance to the Deity in character, aſcribes it to the influence of God upon the mind: "Are you ſurpriſed," ſays he, "that man ſhould approach to the gods? It is God that comes to men; nay, which is yet more, he enters into them; for no mind becomes virtuous but by his aſſiſtance."* Simplicius alſo was ſo ſenſible of the neceſſity of ſuch an influence, that he "prays to God, as the father and guide of reaſon, ſo to co-operate with us, as to purge us from all carnal and brutiſh affections, that we may be enabled to act according to the dictates of reaſon, and to attain to the true knowledge of himſelf." † And Maximus Tyrius argues, agreeably to what was ſaid above, that "if ſkill in the profeſſions and ſciences is inſinuated into men's minds by a Divine influence, we can much leſs imagine, that a thing ſo much more excellent, as

* *Miraris hominem ad Deos ire? Deus ad homines venit, imò, (quod proprius eſt) in homines venit: nulla ſine Deo mens bona eſt*, He had ſaid but juſt before, *Aſcendentibus manum porrigunt.*
Senec. *Epiſtol.* LXXIII.

† Ικέτευε σε, Διόσκορε, ὁ πατὴρ καὶ ἡγεμὼν τῦ ἐν ἡμῖν λόγυ, —— συμπράξαι ὡς αὐτοκινήτοις ἡμῖν πρὸς τε καθαρσιν τῦ ἀπὸ τῦ σωματικῦ καὶ τῶν ἀλόγων παθῶν, κ.λ. Simplic. in Epictet. *ad fin.*

virtue is, can be the work of any mortal art; for ſtrange muſt be the notion that we have of God, to think that he is liberal and free in matters of leſs moment, and ſparing in the greateſt." * And in the ſame diſcourſe he tells us, "that even the beſt diſpoſed minds, as they are ſeated in the midſt, between the higheſt virtue and extreme wickedneſs, need the aſſiſtance and the help of God, to incline and lead "them to the better ſide."†—I am ſenſible that all theſe philoſophers, with many more who ſpeak to the ſame purpoſe, living after Chriſt's time, may be ſaid to have learned ſuch language from Chriſtians: and if they did ſo, I wiſh all who have ſince worn the name had been equally teachable; but ſome who appeared much earlier, ſpeak much in the ſame manner,‡ as I might eaſily ſhew you, if it were not already more than time to obſerve,

* Εἰδα εκεινα μεν ηδη θεια τινι επιπνοια ψυχαις ανθρωπιναις ανακιρναθαι, το δε τιθεν σπανιωτερον την αρετην ερδον ειναι τεχνης θνητης· η πολλω αξιων νομιζεις το θειον, περ μεν τα φαυλα καλως και αρθονως παρεσκευασμενον, περ δε τα κρειττω απορον. Max. Tyr. Diſſert. xxii.

† Αι αριεαι ψυχης φυσεις, αμφισβητησιμοι εν μεσω της ακρας αρετης, προς την ισχαλην μοχθηρεν καθωρμισμεναι, διονται ξυναγωνιςυ Θευ και ξυλληπτορος της επι θαττερα τα κρειττα ζοπης και χειραγωγιας. Max. Tyr. *ibid.*

‡ It is here remarkable, that *Xenophon* repreſents *Cyrus*, with his dying breath, "as humbly aſcribing it to *a Divine influence* on his mind, that he had been taught to acknowledge the care of Providence, and to bear his proſperity with a becoming moderation:" Πολλη δε υμιν χαρις, οτι καγω εγιγνωσκον την υμετεραν, και ωδε σωφρονως επι ταις ευτυχιαις υπερ ανθρωπον εφερονησα. Xen. Cyropæd. *lib.* viii. *cap.* 7. § 1. And Socrates is introduced, by Plato, as declaring, "that whereſoever virtue comes, it is apparently the fruit of a *Divine diſpenſation*:" Θειᾳ μοιρᾳ ημιν φαινεται παραγιγνομενη η αρετη, οις παραγιγνεται. Plat. Men. *ad fin. p.* 428. And to this purpoſe Plato has obſerved, "that virtue is not to be taught but by *Divine aſſiſtance*:" Αλλ' ως αν δεδαξεται, ει μη Θεος υφηγηται. Epinom. *pag.* 1014. And elſewhere he declares, "that if any man eſcape the temptations of life, and behave himſelf as becomes a worthy member of ſociety, as the laws of it are generally ſettled," which, by the way, is ſomething very far ſhort of religion, "he has reaſon to own, that it is God that ſaves him:" Ευ γαρ χρη ειδηναι, ο τι περ αν σωθη τε και γενηται οιον δει, εν τοιαυτη καταςασει πολιτειων, Θεου μοιραν αυτο σωσαι. De Repub. *lib.* vi. *pag.* 677. *edit. Franc. of* 1602.

[3.] That we may further argue the divine agency in this bleſſed work, "from the violent oppoſition over which it prevails in its riſe and progreſs."

The awakened ſoul, when labouring towards God, and aſpiring after further communications of his grace to form it for his ſervice, may juſtly ſay with David, *Lord, how are they increaſed that trouble me? How many are they that riſe up againſt me* (1)? With how many threatening dangers are we continually ſurrounded! And what a numerous hoſt of enemies are ready to oppoſe us! *The law of ſin, that wars in our members* (2), and concerning whoſe forces it may well be ſaid, *their name is Legion, for they are many* (3): The evil influence of a degenerate world, whoſe corrupt examples preſs like a torrent, and require the moſt vigorous efforts to bear up againſt them: And in confederacy with theſe, and at the head of all, the Prince of Darkneſs, whoſe counſels and efforts, with relation to this world of ours, do as it were centre in this one thing, to prevent men's regeneration; becauſe it is by means of this, *that thoſe are recovered out of the ſnare of the devil, who were before led captive by him at his will* (4).

I perſuade myſelf, that when I am ſpeaking on this head, though ſome may imagine it to be mere empty harangue, and common place declamation, the experienced ſoul will atteſt the truth of what I ſay. It may be ſome of you, who, by what of theſe ſermons you have already heard, have come under ſome ſerious convictions, and been awakened in good earneſt to be thoughtful about being born again, have felt ſuch a ſtruggle in your own minds, that you may ſay, you never knew before what the *fleſh*, the *world*, and the *devil* were, nor could have imagined that their oppoſition to this work was ſo forcible and violent as you now find it. To reform the irregularities of the life is comparatively eaſy; but to root ſin out of the ſoul, to conſecrate the whole heart to God, and demoliſh thoſe idols that have been ſet up, as it were, in the ſecret *chambers of imagery* (5), is difficult indeed; all the corruptions of the heart in ſuch a caſe are ready to exert themſelves, and it is

(1) Pſal. iii. 1. (2) Rom. vii. 23. (3) Mark v. 9.
(4) 2 Tim. ii. 26. (5) Ezek. viii. 12.

natural for the *lusts of the flesh* to unite against that which is set upon destroying them all; nor did you ever know before, that there was such a world of sin within you.—With violence also does the *strong man armed* exert himself, when *his goods* are about to be *taken from him* by one *stronger than himself*; as our Lord, with an unerring propriety and wisdom, represents it (1); and indeed it seems as if through the violence of his malignity, and the righteous judgment of God, who, whenever he pleases, can *take the wise in his own craftiness* (2), that Satan sometimes overshoots his mark, and raises so sensible an opposition against the cause of God in the soul, that an argument might be drawn, even from that very opposition, to prove the truth and excellency of what he sets himself so directly against. And you have now perhaps experienced too, more than you ever did before, the inveterate opposition of the *seed of the serpent* to *that of the woman*: you have found, that since you began to think of religion in good earnest, some have derided you, others it may be have reviled you, and enemies have sprung up *out of your own house* (3); though the impressions you have felt tend to make you more amiable, more kind, and more useful, and therefore one would think should conciliate their friendship: but this is a memorable instance in which self-love seems to make, as it were, a sacrifice of itself to the hatred of God. Now therefore, to accomplish such a mighty change in the midst of such opposition, must evidently speak a Divine interposition. And surely the Christian, when thus recovered and restored, has reason to declare, as Israel did, *if it had not been the Lord who was on our side when* these confederate enemies *rose up against us, then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us; then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul, then the proud waters had gone over our soul* (4), and would have quenched and buried every spark that looked like Divine life, and have borne away every purpose of reformation and

(1) Luke xi. 21, 22. (2) 1 Cor. iii. 19. (3) Mat. x. 36.
(4) Psal. cxxiv. 1—5.

holineſs. The remark will be further illuſtrated, if we conſider,

[4.] "By what feeble means this change is accompliſhed."

The Apoſtle obſerves, that in his day *they had the treaſure* of the goſpel lodged *in earthen veſſels, that the excellency of the power*, which rendered it ſucceſsful, *might* appear to *be of God, and not of man* (1). And it is ſtill in a great meaſure apparent, that the ſame method is made uſe of, from the ſame principle. *The weapons of our warfare are not carnal;* and if at any time they are *mighty* and effectual, it muſt be only *through God* (2). It is *not by* ſecular *might or power* (3), that this great work is accompliſhed: no, nor by the refinements of learning, or the charms of eloquence. Theſe things indeed have their uſe; the underſtanding may ſometimes be convinced by the one, and the affections moved by the other: yet where both theſe have been done, the work often drops ſhort: and it may be the plaineſt addreſſes from a weak and almoſt trembling tongue, ſhall perform that which the far ſuperior talents of many have not been able to effect. A multitude of ſuch inſtances have been found, and perhaps ſeldom in theſe latter ages more obſervable than in the compaſs of our own obſervation.

Now whenever this work is accompliſhed by the preaching of the goſpel in a Chriſtian country, there is generally ſome circumſtance that ſhews it is a Divine, and not a human work. It is not the novelty of the doctrine which ſtrikes; for all the main truths, on which the conviction and impreſſion turns, have been known even from early infancy. No miracles awaken the attention, no new diſcoveries aſtoniſh the mind; but what has a thouſand times been heard, and as often neglected, breaks in upon the mind with an almoſt irreſiſtible energy, and ſtrikes it as if it never had been heard of before. They ſeem as it were, *when the Lord turneth again their captivity*, to awaken out of *a dream* (4), and wonder at the accident that has awakened them. The *miniſtry of the word* may ſeem but *feeble*, when compared to ſuch

(1) 2 Cor. iv. 7. (2) 2 Cor. x. 4. (3) Zech. iv. 6. (4) Pſ. cxxvi. 1.

an event: and yet ſometimes even leſs ſolemn methods than that ſhall be effectual. One ſingle text of Scripture accidentally occurring to the ſight or thought, one ſerious hint dropped in converſation, ſhall ſtrike the mind, and pierce it through with an energy that plainly ſhews, that from whatever feeble hand it might ſeem to come, it was ſhot out of the *quiver of God*, and intended by him that made the heart to reach it: ſince there is almoſt as much diſproportion between the cauſe and the effect, as between *Moſes lifting up his rod* and the *dividing* of the water *of the ſea* before *Iſrael* (1). In many inſtances, remarkable providences, which one would have thought ſhould have ſtruck the ſoul as it were to the centre, have produced no effect: and yet a word, or a thought, has accompliſhed it: and after the *whirlwind*, the *earthquake*, and the *fire* have made their ſucceſſive efforts in vain, it has appeared that *the Lord has been in the ſtill ſmall voice* (2). On the whole, a variety of circumſtances may illuſtrate the matter in different degrees; but, taking it in a general view, the remark appears to be well-founded, "that the weakneſs of the means, by which the ſaving change is wrought, argues plainly that the hand of God is in it;" as when *anointing the eyes with ſpittle* gave *ſight to the blind* (3), it was evidently the exertion of a miraculous power.——But now, agreeably to what has been advanced under theſe ſeveral heads, I ſhall proceed to ſhow at large,

[5.] "That the Scripture teaches us to aſcribe this great change on the mind to a *Divine agency* and *operation*."

And here you will ſee, that it does not merely drop here and there an expreſſion which is capable of ſuch an interpretation, but that the whole tenor of the word of God leads to ſuch a concluſion: and ſurely, if we own the word to be divine, we need no more convincing argument of the truth of this remark. The only difficulty I ſhall here find, will be like that which occurred under the former head, and proceeds from the variety and multiplicity of texts which offer themſelves to me while

(1) Exod. xiv. 16. (2) 1 Kings xix. 11, 12. (3) John ix. 6.

reflecting on this ſubject: however, I will endeavour to rank them in the plaineſt and beſt order I can, under the following particulars. We find God ſometimes *promiſes* to produce ſuch a change in men's minds;—— and at other times he *ſpeaks* of it *as his own work*, when it has been already produced:—the Scripture repreſents even the *increaſe of piety* in a regenerate heart, as the effect of a Divine power; and how much more muſt the *firſt implanting* of it be ſo: nay, it goes yet further than this, and expreſſes *the neceſſity* as well as the *reality* of a Divine influence on the mind to make it truly religious, and reſolves *the want of true religion* into this, that God withholds his influence.—If therefore any one, and much more if all theſe particulars can be made out, I think it muſt force a conviction on your judgment at leaſt, that what we are endeavouring to confirm in this diſcourſe is the doctrine of Scripture.

1. There are various places in Scripture, wherein "God promiſes to produce ſuch a change in men's minds as we have before deſcribed;" which plainly ſhews that it is to be acknowledged as his work.

Thus Moſes ſays to Iſrael, without all doubt by the Divine direction, *The Lord thy God will circumciſe thy heart, and the heart of thy ſeed, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy ſoul, that thou mayeſt live* (1). And this circumciſion of the heart muſt ſurely be the removal of ſome inſenſibility and pollution adhering to it, and bringing it to a more orderly, regular, obedient ſtate: which, as it is ſometimes made matter of exhortation, and thus indeed proves that there is a view in which it may be conſidered as a duty incumbent upon us (as when Moſes ſaid, *circumciſe the fore-ſkin of your heart* (2); and Jeremiah, in imitation of him, *circumciſe yourſelves to the Lord, and take away the fore-ſkin of your heart* (3);) ſo here it is put in the form of a promiſe, to ſignify that wherever it was done, it was in conſequence of God's preventing and aſſiſting grace. On the ſame principle, the Father promiſes to Chriſt, *thy people ſhall be willing in the day of thy power* (4): and if any pretend that theſe words may poſſibly admit of another verſion,

(1) Deut. xxx. 6. (2) Deut. x. 16. (3) Jer. iv. 4. (4) Pſa. cx. 3.

though I know none more juſt than this, there are many other parallel places which are not attended with any ambiguity at all. Such, in particular, is that gracious promiſe, (which though it was immediately made to the houſe of Iſrael, is nevertheleſs quoted by the Apoſtles as expreſſive of God's goſpel covenant with all believers;) *After thoſe days, ſaith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and I will be their God, and they ſhall be my people* (1): or, as it is elſewhere expreſſed by the ſame prophet Jeremiah, *I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever; and I will put my fear in their hearts, that they ſhall not depart from me* (2). And Ezekiel echos back the ſame language by the ſame Spirit; *I will give them one heart, and I will put a new ſpirit within you; and I will take the ſtony heart out of their fleſh, and will give them a heart of fleſh; that they may walk in my ſtatutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them* (3); which is afterwards repeated again almoſt in the ſame words; *A new heart alſo will I give you, and a new ſpirit will I put within you: and I will take away the ſtony heart out of your fleſh, and I will give you an heart of fleſh; and I will put my Spirit within you, and cauſe you to walk in my ſtatutes, and ye ſhall keep my judgments, and do them* (4). Now ſuch a transformation of the heart and ſpirit as may be repreſented by a thorough renovation, or by changing ſtone into fleſh, ſpeaks the doctrine I am aſſerting in as plain terms as we could contrive or expreſs, and beautifully points out at once the greatneſs and excellency of the change, and the Almighty power by which it is effected; for we may aſſure ourſelves God would never promiſe ſuch influences, if he did not really mean to impart them. But again,

2. Agreeably to the tenor of theſe promiſes, the "Scripture alſo aſcribes this work to a Divine agency, when it is effected."

Thus the apoſtle John, when he is ſpeaking of thoſe who, on *receiving Chriſt, become the ſons of God*, declares concerning them that *they were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the fleſh, nor of the will of man, but of God* (5):

(1) Jer. xxxi. 33. Heb. viii. 10. (2) Jer. xxxiii. 32, 39, 40.
(3) Ezek. xi. 19, 20. (4) Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. (5) John i. 13.

plainly intimating that it was to him, and not only or chiefly to themſelves or others, that this happy change was to be aſcribed: which is well explained by thoſe words of St. James, in which he ſays, *of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we ſhould be a kind of firſt-fruits of his creatures* (1). Accordingly our Lord, as you have heard at large, inſiſts upon it as abſolutely neceſſary to a man's *entering into the kingdom of God*, not only that he ſhould be born again, but more particularly that he ſhould *be born of the Spirit* (2), i. e. by the ſanctifying influence of the Spirit of God operating upon his ſoul, to purify and cleanſe it.—And as this great work of regeneration chiefly conſiſts in being brought to faith and repentance, you may obſerve, that each of theſe are ſpoken of as a Divine production in the mind, or as the gift of God to it. Thus the believing Jews, with one conſent, expreſſed their conviction when they heard the ſtory of Cornelius, and declare, *then has God alſo to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life* (3). And ſo the Apoſtle Paul expreſſes it, when ſpeaking of the poſſibility that ſome might be *recovered out of the ſnare of the devil*, he ſays, *If God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth* (4). That very attention to the goſpel, which is the firſt ſtep towards the production of faith in the ſoul, is reſolved into this, when it is ſaid, that *the Lord opened Lydia's heart, that ſhe attended to the things which were ſpoken by Paul* (5). And with regard to the progreſs of it, it is not only ſaid in general, *you hath he quickened, who were dead in treſpaſſes and ſins*; but *faith* expreſsly declared to be *the gift of God* (6); and the apoſtle ſays to the Philippians, that it was *given to them to believe* (7); nay, it is repreſented as a moſt glorious and illuſtrious effort of Divine power, and aſcribed to *the exceeding greatneſs of his power towards them that believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Chriſt, when he raiſed him from the dead* (8).—And in this view it is, that this change is called *a new creation* (9); plainly implying, as a cele-

(1) Jam. i. 18. (2) John iii. 3, 5. (3) Acts xi. 18.
(4) 2 Tim. ii. 25, 26. (5) Acts xvi. 41. (6) Epheſ. ii. 1, 8.
(7) Phil. i. 29. (8) Eph. i. 19, 20. (9) 2 Cor. v. 17.

brated writer well expreſſes it, "that ſomething muſt here be done in us, and for us, which cannot be done by us." Wherefore it is ſaid, that *the new man is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him* (1): and *we are his workmanſhip, created in Chriſt Jeſus unto good works* (2): not to inſiſt upon the great variety of parallel paſſages, in which the ſame thoughts are expreſſed almoſt in the very ſame words. But he indeed who would reckon up all the Scriptures, both in the Old and New Teſtament, which directly or indirectly refer to this, muſt tranſcribe a larger part of both than would be convenient to read at one time in a worſhipping aſſembly.—But we may further, by a very ſtrong conſequence, infer the doctrine I am now maintaining from thoſe various paſſages of the ſacred writers, in which,

3. "The increaſe of piety in a heart already regenerated, is ſpoken of as the work of God."

Thus David, even when he felt himſelf diſpoſed to the moſt vigorous proſecution of religion, ſolemnly declares his dependence upon continued Divine influences, to enable him to execute the holy purpoſe he was then moſt affectionately forming: *I will run the way of thy commandments*, ſays he, *when thou ſhalt enlarge my heart* (3), or when thou ſhalt influence it with a ſteady principle of zeal, and with thoſe devout paſſions which may make every branch of my duty eaſy and delightful. And the Apoſtle Paul declares his perſuaſion that God would continue thoſe gracious influences which he had already imparted: *He that has begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jeſus Chriſt* (4). And when he ſpeaks of the ardent deſire with which Chriſtians were aſpiring towards a better world, he adds, *He that hath wrought us for the ſelf-ſame thing is God* (5). Thus alſo he aſcribes his continued fidelity in the miniſtry to the grace of God that was with him, as being *one that had obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful* (6): and *by the grace of God*, ſays he, *I am what I am:* and if *I have laboured more abundantly than* others, it is *not I, but the grace of God which was with*

(1) Col. iii. 10. (2) Eph. ii. 10. (3) Pſal. cxix. 32.
(4) Phil. i. 6. (5) 2 Cor. v. 5. (6) 1 Cor. vii. 25.

me (1): on the same principle he acknowledges, that the success of Apollos in watering, as well as his own in planting, was to be referred to this, that *God gave the increase* in the one case as well as in the other (2). And he concludes his Epistle to the Hebrews with this remarkable prayer; *The God of peace make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ* (3). But indeed, as every prayer that the Apostles offer for any of their Christian brethren and friends, that they may *grow in grace*, might be urged for the illustration of this head, I choose rather to refer the rest to your own observation on this general hint, than to enter into a more particular enumeration. I shall only add, to complete the argument,

4. That the Scripture often declares "the necessity as well as the reality of such influences, and refers the ruin of man to this circumstance, that God in his righteous judgment had withheld or withdrawn them."

When Moses would upbraid the obstinacy of the Israelites, that all the profusion of wonders wrought for them in Egypt and in the wilderness had not produced any suitable impressions; so much was he accustomed to think of every thing good, in the moral, as well as in the natural world, as the gift of God, that he uses this remarkable expression: *Yet the Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day* (4). And our Lord, the propriety of whose expressions surely none can arraign, speaks to the same purpose, when adoring the Divine conduct with respect to the dispensation of saving light and gospel blessings, he says, *I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight* (5). If some of the plainest and lowest of the people, who were in comparison to others but as little children, understood and received the gospel, while the

(1) 1 Cor. xv. 10. (2) 1 Cor. iii. 6, 7. (3) Heb. xiii. 21.
(4) Deut. xxix. 4. (5) Matt. xi. 25, 26.

learned men and politicians of the age despised it, God revealed it to the former, while he suffered the veil of prejudice to remain on the mind of the latter, though his Almighty hand could easily have removed it.——Those other words of our Lord must not be omitted here, in which he says, *No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him* (1): and what this *drawing of the Father* means, he himself has explained by saying, *No man can come unto me, except it be given him of my Father* (2); and elsewhere he expresses it by *learning of the Father* (3); all which must undoubtedly signify a Divine agency and influence on the mind.—Nay, a more forcible expression than this is made use of by the Evangelist, where he takes notice of the unbelief of those that saw the miracles of Christ, *therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said, he has blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts* (4): which is agreeable to that expression of the Apostle Paul, *he has mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will, he hardeneth* (5): a thought which the Apostle pursues at large through the following verses.

These, to be sure, are very emphatical Scriptures: and though it is necessary to understand them in such a qualified sense as to make them consistent with other Scriptures which charge men's destruction, not on any necessitating decree of God, but upon themselves, and the abuse of their own faculties; yet still these expressions must stand for something; and in the most moderate sense that can be put upon them, they directly confirm what I have here brought them to prove. So that on the whole, the matter must come to this, "That the cause of men's final and everlasting ruin may be referred in one view of it, to God's withholding those gracious influences, which, if they had been imparted, would indeed have subdued the greatest perverseness: but his withholding these influences is not merely an arbitrary act, but the just punishment of men's wickedness, and of their obstinate folly in trifling with the means of his grace, and grieving his Spirit till it was provoked to withdraw." This thought, which I might largely

(1) John vi. 44. (2) Ver. 65. (3) Ver. 45.
(4) John xii. 39, 40. (5) Rom. ix. 18.

prove to you to be a compendium of the Scripture ſcheme, reconciles all; and any conſequences drawn from one part of that ſcheme to the denial of the other, how plauſible ſoever, muſt certainly be falſe.

I hope what I have here ſaid may be ſufficient to fix a conviction in your judgments and conſciences, "that regeneration is ultimately to be referred to a Divine influence upon the ſoul;" or, as the Apoſtle expreſſes it in the text, that *God ſaves us of his mercy, by the waſhing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghoſt, which he ſhed on us abundantly through Jeſus Chriſt our Saviour.*

I ſhall conclude with two or three reflections, which, though ſo exceeding obvious, I ſhall touch upon, in regard to their great importance, without offering, as I might, to dilate on each of them at large.

[1.] Let thoſe who have experienced this Divine change in their ſouls give God the glory of it.

Perhaps there are many of you who may ſee peculiar reaſon to do it; perhaps you may be conſcious to yourſelves, that the arm of the Lord was remarkably revealed in conquering every ſenſible oppoſition, and getting itſelf the victory, even when you ſeemed as if you had been reſolutely bent upon your own deſtruction, to ſtruggle to the utmoſt againſt the operation of his grace on your ſoul. Others may perhaps have perceived the ſtrength of the Divine agency in the ſlightneſs of the occaſion, or in the weakneſs of the means by which he wrought; which indeed is often matter of aſtoniſhment to thoſe that ſeriouſly reflect upon it. But whatever your inclinations may have appeared, and whatever means or inſtruments were uſed, give God the glory of all.

If you have found yourſelves, from your early years, inclined to attend to divine things, and ſuſceptible of tender impreſſions from them, that attention and thoſe impreſſions were to be reſolved into this, that God prevented you with the bleſſings of his goodneſs. If you have enjoyed the moſt excellent public ordinances, even with all the concurrent advantages that the moſt preſſing exhortations, and the moſt edifying example of parents, miniſters, and companions could give; it was Divine

Providence that furniſhed you with thoſe advantages, and Divine grace that added efficacy to them, elſe they had only ſerved to diſplay their own weakneſs, even where they might have appeared moſt powerful, and to illuſtrate that inſenſibility or obſtinacy of heart which would have rendered you proof againſt all. You do well indeed to honour thoſe whom God has bleſſed as the means of your ſpiritual edification: but if they think aright, it would grieve them to the very heart to have thoſe applauſes given, and thoſe acknowledgements made to them, which are due to God alone. All they have done is ſo little that it deſerves not the mention; and the greater attainments they have made in religion, the more cordially will they join with the holy Apoſtle in ſaying, *Neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increaſe* (1).

[2]. We may further infer, that they who attempt the converſion of ſinners, ſhould do it with an humble dependence on the co-operation of Divine grace.

Otherwiſe they will probably find themſelves fatally diſappointed; and after their moſt ſkillful or moſt laborious attempts, they will complain that they *have laboured in vain, and ſpent their ſtrength for naught* (2); and find reaſon to ſay, *The bellows are burnt, and the lead is conſumed of the fire*, yet the droſs is not *taken away* (3). A dependence upon God, in all the common affairs of life, becomes us as we are *creatures*; and it is moſt neceſſary that we ſhould, *in all our ways, acknowledge him*, as we expect or deſire that *he ſhould direct* or proſper *our paths* (4): but the greater the undertaking is, the more ſolemn ſhould the acknowledgement of God be.

Let me therefore eſpecially recommend this to thoſe who are coming forth as young officers in the army of Chriſt. See to it, my brethren, that *in the name of your God you ſet up your banners* (5); that you apply from time to time to your public work with a deep conviction upon your minds that no ſtrength of reaſon will effectually convince, that no eloquence will effectually perſuade, unleſs he that made men's hearts will plead his own

(1) 1 Cor. iii. 7. (2) Iſa. xlix. 4. (3) Jer. vi. 29.
(4) Prov. iii. 6. (5) Pſal. xx. 5.

cauſe, and bow thoſe hearts in humble ſubjection. With theſe views, I have often known the feebleſt attempts ſucceſsful, and the meek and lowly have *out of weakneſs been made ſtrong* (1); while for want of this, all the charms of compoſition and delivery have been at beſt but like *the lovely ſong of one who has a pleaſant voice*, or the art of *one that can play well on an inſtrument* (2). It is *thoſe that honour God* by the moſt cordial dependence upon him that *he delights to honour* (3): and I will preſume to ſay, that it is the inward conviction of this important truth, which I feel upon my ſoul while I am confirming it to you, that encourages me to hope, that *this labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord* (4), but that a Divine bleſſing ſhall evidently attend what has already been delivered, and what ſhall further be ſpoke. Only let me conclude my preſent Diſcourſe with this one neceſſary caution,

[3.] That you do not abuſe this doctrine of the *neceſſity of Divine influences*, which, from the word of God, has been ſo abundantly confirmed.

God does indeed act upon us, in order to produce this happy change: but he acts upon us in a manner ſuitable to our rational nature, and not as if we were mere machines. He ſaves us, as the Scripture expreſſes it, by awaking *us* to *ſave ourſelves* (5): *a new heart does he give us, and a new ſpirit does he put within us* (6), to ſtir us up to be ſolicitous *to make ourſelves a new heart and a new ſpirit* (7): he *circumciſes our heart to love him* (8), by engaging *us* to *take away the fore-ſkin of our hearts* (9). You ſee the correſpondency of the phraſes, and it is of great importance that you attend to it.—If any therefore ſay, "I will ſit ſtill, and attempt nothing for my own recovery, till God irreſiſtibly compels me to it:" he ſeems as like to periſh, as that man would be, who, ſeeing the houſe in flames about him, ſhould not attempt to make his eſcape, till he felt himſelf moved by a miracle. Sirs, the dependence of the creature on God, though it be eſpecially, yet it is not only, in ſpiritual affairs: it runs through all our intereſts and concerns. We as really depend upon

(1) Heb. xi. 34. (2) Ezek. xxxiii. 32. (3) 1 Sam. ii. 30.
(4) 1 Cor. xv. 58. (5) Acts ii. 40. (6) Ezek. xxxvi. 26.
(7) Ezek. xviii. 31. (8) Deut. xxx. 6. (9) Jer. iv. 4.

his influence to ſtretch out our hand[illegible] curioſity, our hearts toward him in prayer. Y[illegible]ſt you more produce their fruit without hi[illegible]ay word could, without it, become fruitf[illegible]d yet you plough and ſow; and would l[illegible] madman, that upon this principle ſhou[illegible] ing, that no crop could be expected if [illegible] duce it; and that if he pleaſed to pro[illegible]e it, it would come up without any human labour. The argument is juſt the ſame in that caſe, as when men plead for the neglect of means or endeavours, from the reality and neceſſity of a Divine concurrence. And if they apply this argument to the concerns of their ſouls, when they do not apply it to thoſe of their bodies, it plainly ſhews, that they regard their bodies more than their ſouls; and that, in pretending to make theſe excuſes, they belie their conſcience, and act againſt the ſecret conviction of their own heart. Such perſons do not deſerve to be diſputed with, but rather ſhould be ſolemnly admoniſhed of the danger of ſuch egregious trifling, where eternity is at ſtake. And ſure I am, that it is offering a great affront to the memory of the bleſſed Paul, when men pretend to encourage themſelves in this perverſe temper from any thing he has ſaid. For when he gives us, as it were, the ſubſtance of all I have now been ſaying, in thoſe comprehenſive words, *It is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleaſure* (1); he is ſo far from mentioning it as an excuſe for remiſſneſs and ſloth, that he introduces it profeſſedly in the very contrary view, as engaging us to exert ourſelves with the utmoſt vigour in a dependence upon that Divine operation. And therefore, as he there expreſſes it, I ſay with him, *Work out your own ſalvation with fear and trembling*; and if you will not do it, you have reaſon to tremble in the proſpect of a final condemnation from God, aggravated by your having thus irrationally and ungratefully abuſed the revelation of his grace.

(1) Phil. ii. 12.

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SERMON VIII.

OF THE VARIOUS METHODS OF THE DIVINE OPERATION IN THE PRODUCTION OF THIS SAVING CHANGE.

1 COR. XII. 6.

——There are diverſities of operations, but it is the ſame God, which worketh all in all.

WHATEVER the original ſenſe of theſe words was, and how peculiarly ſoever they may relate to the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, the whole tenor of the Diſcourſe now intended will ſhew, with how much propriety they may, at leaſt, be accommodated to the operations of his grace. I have proved to you in the laſt of theſe Lectures, that wherever regeneration is produced, it is ultimately to be aſcribed to a Divine agency; and though I cannot ſay it is equally important, yet I apprehend it may be both agreeable and uſeful to proceed,

Fifthly, To ſurvey the variety of thoſe methods, which God is pleaſed to take in producing this happy change: or, to borrow the language of the text, to conſider the *diverſity of operations*, by which *the ſame God, who worketh all in all*, (i. e. who produces all the virtues and graces of the Chriſtian character, in ſome degree, in all his people) is pleaſed, according to his own wiſe and gracious purpoſes, to proceed in his agency on thoſe whom he regenerates and ſaves.

And this ſurvey will not be matter of mere curioſity, but may probably revive the hearts of ſome amongſt you by the recollection of your own experience: and it may be a caution to others, who, for want of due compaſs and extent of thought and knowledge, are ready to argue, as if God had but one way to work on the human heart, and that one the particular manner by which he recovered them. Of this I ſhall ſpeak more largely hereafter. In the mean time, I judged it neceſſary to premiſe this hint, to direct us as to the temper with which this diſcourſe ſhould be heard, as well as to the purpoſe to which it is to be improved.

Now what I have to offer on this ſubject will be ranged under theſe three heads. There is a diverſity and variety obſervable—in the *time*—the *occaſion*—and the *manner*, of the Divine operations on the ſoul.

I. There is an obſervable variety, "as to the time of God's gracious operations on different perſons."

Some are called in their infancy:—others, and theſe perhaps the greateſt part, are wrought upon in youth:—and ſome very few in the advance, and even in the decline of life.

1. Some are wrought upon by Divine grace "in their *infancy*."

This is often the caſe; and I doubt not, but if parents were to do their duty, it would much more frequently be ſo. And it is an honour which God is pleaſed, in ſome inſtances, remarkably to confer on a good education; which is indeed ſo important a duty on one ſide, and ſo great a privilege on the other, that it is the leſs to be wondered at, that he ſo mercifully encourages Chriſtian parents in the diſcharge of it; thus granting, as it were, an immediate *reward* for this *labour of love*. And I muſt here take the freedom, on my own obſervation, to ſay, that God ſeems eſpecially to own the faithful endeavours of pious mothers in this reſpect. He has wiſely and graciouſly given that ſex a peculiar tenderneſs of addreſs, and an eaſy and inſinuating manner, which is admirably adapted to this great end, for which, no doubt, he eſpecially intended it, that of conveying knowledge to children, and making tender impreſſions on their

minds: and there is hardly any view in which the importance of the sex more evidently appears.

We have encouragement to believe, there are a considerable number who are, as it it were, *sanctified from the womb*, and in whom the seeds of Divine grace are sown, before they grow up to a capacity of understanding the public preaching of the word: a remark, which Mr. Baxter carries so far as to say, "that he believes, if the duties of religious education were conscientiously discharged, preaching would not be God's ordinary method of converting souls: but the greater part would be wrought upon before they were capable of entering into the design of a sermon." And indeed it seems to me, that children may early come to have some apprehensions of what is most important in religion. They may have a reverence for God, and a love for him, as that great Father who made them, and that kind Friend who gives them every thing that they have: they may have a fear of doing any thing that would displease him; and though it is not so easy for them to understand the doctrines peculiar to a Redeemer, yet when they hear of Christ as the Son of God, who came down from heaven to teach men and children the way thither; who loved them, and did them good every day, and at last died to deliver them from death and hell; their little hearts may well be impressed with such thoughts as these, and they may find a growing desire *to be instructed* in what Christ is, and what he taught and did, and *to do* what shall appear to be *his will*. And wherever this is the prevailing disposition, it seems to me that the seeds of holiness are sown in that soul, though but small proficiency may be made in knowledge, and though the capacities for service may be very low.

I will add, that some remarkably pertinent and solid things, which little children have said concerning religion, seem to me plainly to evidence, that they have been, in many instances, under some uncommon teachings of the Divine Spirit: and it seems perfectly suitable to the genius of Christianity, that in this sense God should *ordain strength out of the mouth of babes and sucklings* (r), and

(r) Psal. viii. 2.

should *reveal* to them *what he has* suffered to be *hidden from the wise and prudent* (1). Nor can I suppose it hard for any, who have been for a considerable time acquainted with the state of religion in Christian societies, to recollect various instances, in which persons thus early *taught of God*, who have heard, and known, and loved the Scriptures, and delighted in ordinances and serious discourse from their childhood, have been, in some measure, like Samuel, Obadiah, Jeremiah, Josiah, and Timothy, honoured with eminent usefulness in the church, and have happily filled some of its most important stations of service. Almost every age has afforded instances of this; and I am persuaded, many are now growing up amongst us, who will be instances of it in ages yet to come.

2. Others, and these perhaps the greatest part of real Christians, are wrought upon "in their *youthful days*."

Many parents are very deficient in a due care to cultivate the infant minds of their little ones; or the feeble and general impressions then made are, perhaps, worn out and lost, in the growing vanities of childhood and youth. They begin to be drawn away by evil inclinations and examples, and by the delusions of a flattering world, which then puts on its most attractive charms, to gain upon their inexperienced minds: and hereupon they *follow after vanity, and become vain* (2): *of the rock which begat them, they* grow *unmindful, and forget the God that formed them* (3). But by one method or another, God often stops them in this dangerous career; and awakening ordinances, or more awakening providences, bring them to a stand, and turn them the contrary way. *The terrors of the Lord set themselves in array* against them (4); or his mercy melts their souls, and they yield themselves its willing captives. They consecrate their hearts, warm as they are with youthful vigour, to be the sacrifices of Divine love, and enter, it may be, very early into the bonds of God's covenant; and so prove such *a seed to serve him*, as is *accounted to the Lord for a* most honourable and useful *generation* (5). Blessed be

(1) Matt. xi. 25. (2) 2 Kings xvii. 15. (3) Deut. xxxii. 18.
(4) Job. vi. 4. (5) Psal xxii. 30.

God, I speak to many who know this by experience! By far the greater part of those who have been admitted to your communion, since I settled among you, have been, as I apprehend, under the age of twenty-four years: and several of those, who were farther advanced in life when they first approached the table of the Lord, had been brought to real religion in their much earlier years; though particular circumstances, or some mistaken apprehensions, might prevent their giving up their names publicly to the Lord, so soon as they might, and as they ought to have done it.

3. Some few are wrought upon by Divine grace "in the *advance*, and even in the *decline* of life."

I confess that the number of these is comparatively small: and it is not to be wondered at, that it is so. They are not many who arrive to what can properly be called old age; and of them but a very inconsiderable part are then brought to any thing which looks like a saving change. Nor shall we be much surprised at this, if we consider the inveterate nature of bad habits, which render it almost as hard for them *that are accustomed to do evil*, to learn *to do good*, as it is for *the Ethiopian to change his skin, or the Leopard his spots* (1). To such a degree are prejudices riveted in the mind, so insensible is it rendered of tender and generous impressions, so cold are the affections, and the memory (if the phrase may be allowed) so rigid, that, humanly speaking, there is much less probability of their being impressed with religion, than there was when they were in the bloom of life; notwithstanding all the seeming advantages which might arise from riper reason, deeper experience, and a nearer prospect of eternity. In all these things, it is in vain to reason against observation of fact, since we evidently see how uncommon a thing it is, for persons to be awakened and reformed in old age; especially if they have been educated in the principles of religion, and have made a florid profession of it in their youth, from which they have afterwards apostatized, out of a love to the wealth or honours of the world, or a relish for sensual delights. Such persons generally live and die monuments of Di-

(1) Jer. xiii. 23.

vine wrath, bearing as it were, in characters dreadfully legible, the ſad inſcription of thoſe, "who having forſaken God, are finally forſaken of him." They appear as *dry trees, twice dead*, and fit for nothing but to be *plucked up by the roots, and caſt into the fire* (1).

Nevertheleſs, to prove the infinite energy and ſovereignty of Divine grace, God is ſometimes pleaſed to work even on ſuch. He touches the rock which has ſtood for ages unmoved, and the waters flow forth: he ſays to the dry bones, Live, and they obey; they are clothed with beauty, they are animated with life, and ſtand up as with the vigour of a renewed youth, to purſue the labours of religion, and to fight the *battles of the Lord* (2). Such inſtances, in which aged ſinners have been thus wrought upon, I have read and heard; though (I grieve to ſay it) I can recollect very few, if any, that have occurred to me within the ſphere of my own perſonal obſervation and acquaintance.

But beſides this variety in the time, there is alſo,

II. An obſervable diverſity, "in the occaſion, which Divine grace takes to operate upon different perſons."

The occaſions are indeed ſo various, that it would be impoſſible to enumerate them; I ſhall however juſt touch on ſome of the chief.

And here I might particularly conſider a religious education in this view, and that daily converſe with pious friends, which is of courſe connected with it. But though perhaps there may be no occaſion more conſiderable in itſelf, and none that has been more eminently honoured of God; yet it is proper to wave it here, as having been mentioned under the former head, as well as much more largely illuſtrated in my ſermons on that ſubject, which are in moſt of your houſes, and which I hope, you will often review.

I proceed therefore further to obſerve,—that ſome are wrought upon by the word of God;—others by ſome remarkable providences;—ſome by little incidents, which, inconſiderable as they ſeem in themſelves, grow memorable by the noble effects they are made to produce;—and others by ſecret and immediate impreſſions

(1) Jude ver. 12. John xv. 16. (2) Ezek. xxxvii. 10.

of God upon their ſpirits, which cannot be reſolved into any external cauſe, or any viſible occaſion at all.

1. "The adminiſtration of Divine ordinances, and eſpecially the word of God and prayer," is an occaſion, which he moſt frequently takes, to work upon men's hearts by his grace.

I do not mention the adminiſtration of the ſacraments upon this occaſion; becauſe, though they have ſo noble and effectual a tendency to improve men's minds in piety, and to promote Chriſtian edification; yet I do not remember to have heard of any inſtance, in which they have been the means of men's converſion; which is the leſs to be wondered at, as they are appointed for a very different end.

There are many, however, that have been wrought upon in prayer, as there are many things concur in this to awaken and impreſs the mind. The ſolemn acknowledgements then made of the Divine perfections, the praiſes offered to his tremendous Majeſty, the deep and humble confeſſion of our various and aggravated guilt in his holy preſence, the lamentations over it, the importunate pleadings for a variety of bleſſings both for time and eternity; in a word, all the overflowings of pious affections in the breaſt of him that leads the devotion, and eſpecially the earneſt entreaties then offered for unconverted ſinners, the genuine expreſſions of an undiſſembled apprehenſion of their danger, and the fervent breathings after Divine grace, to be communicated to them for their ſpiritual life: all theſe things, I ſay, and many more, which occur in prayer, when it is managed aright, may, by the Divine bleſſing, be ſingularly uſeful. And I am well aſſured, there have been happy inſtances, in which, *while* God's people *have yet been ſpeaking* to him on this head, he has graciouſly *heard*, and ſignally *anſwered them* (1).

But the reading, and eſpecially the preaching of the word, is the grand occaſion and inſtrument in the converſion of ſouls. *Of his own will he begets them with the word of truth* (2): and it is admirably ſuited to thoſe ſaving impreſſions which it is intended to make on the

(1) Iſa. lxv. 24. (2) Jam. i. 18.

heart, *being quick and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword* (1). It was *while Paul was preaching*, that *the Lord opened Lydia's heart, so that she attended to the things which were spoken* by him (2): and it was while Peter was thus employed, that such vast multitudes *were pricked in their hearts, and said to* him, *and to the rest of the apostles* present, *Men and brethren, what shall we do* (3)? And I am well persuaded, that various and lamentable as the instances are, in which men *stop their ears* and *harden their hearts* against it, *God* does not even to this day *leave it without witness;* but the *terrors of the Lord*, as displayed by his faithful ministers, have subdued their *thousands*, and the riches of his grace their *ten thousands*, when illustrated by those who have not only heard, but have themselves tasted of their sweetness. *The preaching of the cross* may indeed *to them that perish* be *foolishness;* but blessed be his name who died upon it, there is still a happy remnant, to whom it appears to be *the power of God, and the wisdom of God* (4). Evangelical subjects, when opened with perspicuity, and enforced with vigour and tenderness, by those that have experienced the transforming energy of them on their own hearts, and desire above all things, to be *wise to win* the *souls* of others (5), are generally the occasion of producing the most immediate, and the most important change; as I doubt not, but many now present have seen and felt. And the observation of every year of life convinces me more and more, that they who desire to be signally instrumental in this good work, this work of all others, the most benevolent and important, must, in the account of a vain world, *become fools, that they may be wise* (6). How contemptuously soever it may be fashionable to treat such preaching, we must make these subjects familiar to our hearers, and must treat them with all plainness of speech, and all seriousness of address, or we shall generally *labour in vain, and spend our strength for naught* (7). Would to God, that the teachers of our Israel may consider the importance of it, and grow wise by such experiments as these!

(1) Heb. iv. 12. (2) Acts xvi. 14. (3) Acts ii. 37.
(4) 1 Cor. i. 18, 24. (5) Prov. xi. 30. (6) 1 Cor. iii. 18.
(7) Isa. xlix. 4.

that they may act the part of prudent phyſicians, who preſcribe the medicines they find in fact moſt uſeful, and not thoſe concerning which the fineſt ſpeculations may be framed. Till then, whatever their learning, politeneſs, and parade may be, it cannot be expected that our health ſhould be generally recovered; but we are like to continue, what we have long been, a vicious people, amidſt the fineſt encomiums of virtue, that are any where to be found: nor will there be much room to wonder, if ſome of its moſt eloquent advocates ſhould appear, even in their own practice, inſenſible of thoſe charms which they ſo gracefully recommend to others, and ſink in their character below thoſe heathen moraliſts, whom they may chooſe to imitate, rather than Chriſt and his apoſtles. Nevertheleſs, I am perſuaded, that if God intend mercy for us as a people, he will ſupport among us a ſucceſſion of thoſe who ſhall diſpenſe his ordinances in ſuch a manner, as he has generally choſen to honour with ſucceſs. But though the greater part of ſincere converts are reduced by theſe, I am to add,

2. That "remarkable providences, whether merciful or afflictive," are occaſions which God takes to work upon the hearts of many others.

When ordinances have long been attended in vain, God perhaps interpoſes, by other more peculiar and ſignal methods, to *pluck* the trifling and lethargic ſinner *as a firebrand out of the burning* (1).

Sometimes remarkable mercies and deliverances accompliſh the work. An appearance of God in their favour, when they are conſcious to themſelves that they are the unworthieſt of all his creatures, ſhall ſhame and melt them, and powerfully prevail on their minds to *turn unto the Lord*, who *daily loads them with his benefits* (2); and thus ſeems, in more ſenſes than one, to ſend from heaven to ſave them, and to *draw them out of many waters*, in which they had otherwiſe been loſt (3).

But we more frequently ſee, that afflictions are the means of performing this happy work. By a gracious ſeverity God is pleaſed to lay hold on many, and to give them reaſon to bleſs the hand, which, though by a rough

(1) Amos iv. 11. (2) Pſal. lxviii. 19. (3) Pſal. xviii. 16.

motion, delivers them from the flames that were kir
ling around them, and ſhews the Lord to be *merciful*
them (1). Like Jonah in the ſhip, they are awakened
a ſtorm, to *call upon their God* (2): like Manaſſeh, th
are *taken among the thorns, and laid in fetters*, that they m
be brought *to know the Lord* (3): like the jailer, th
are ſhaken with *an earthquake*, and *trembling and aſtoniſ*
they *fall down*, and inquire *what they ſhall do to be ſa*
ed (4). The terrifying fear of the approach of dea
or the diſtreſſing weight of ſome calamity, which thre
ens every moment to ſwallow them up in deſtructic
rouſes their conſciences to an attention to thoſe divi
truths which they had long forgotten, and opens th
records of guilt which they had ſtudiouſly ſealed up.

And there ſeems to be no affliction by which G
more frequently works upon men than by ſickne
When he weakens their capacity for the buſineſs of li
and ſpoils their reliſh for its enjoyments; when he cc
fines them to their chambers, or even to their beds, a
makes their chain ſtraight and *heavy* (5); when he threate
to take them away in the midſt of their days (6), to *depr*
them of the reſidue of their years (7), and immediately
bring them before that awful tribunal, for which th
know, in their own conſciences, they are ſo ill prepare
then do we often ſee the accompliſhment of that obſer
tion which Elihu made ſo many ages ago; *He chaſten*
a man with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bo
with ſtrong pain, ſo that his life abhorreth bread, and his ſ
dainty meat: his fleſh is conſumed away that it cannot be ſee
and his bones, that were not ſeen, ſtick out; yea, his ſoul dra
eth near to the grave, and his life to the deſtroyers: but ſe
ing him *an interpreter, one among a thouſand, to ſhew u*
man his uprightneſs, then he is gracious to him, and ſaith, ir
ſpiritual as well as literal ſenſe, *Deliver him from go*
down to the pit, I have found a ranſom (8). Bleſſed
God, inſtances of this kind have been known, and kno
among us, in which the ſickneſs of the body has wrou
the cure of the ſoul, under the conduct of the great P

(1) Gen. xix. 16. (2) Jonah i. 6. (3) 2 Chron. xxxiii. 11,
(4) Acts xvi. 26—30. (5) Lam. iii. 7. (6) Pſal. cii. 24.
(7) Iſa. xxviii. 10. (8) Job xxxiii. 19—24.

ſician of both; and ſo has proved eminently to the glory of God, and the good of thoſe who, *for a while, have been in heavineſs* (1).

Yet it muſt be acknowledged, that, in other inſtances, the remorſe which a man expreſſes upon a ſick bed, and in the near views of eternity, proves but like that of ſome condemned malefactor, who, when he has obtained a pardon, throws off all thoſe appearances of repentance with which he had once deceived himſelf, and perhaps deceived others too, and plunges himſelf anew into capital crimes; it may be, into crimes for which he afterwards ſuffers death, without thoſe compunctions of conſcience which he before felt, being hardened by a return into ſin, attended with ſuch dreadful aggravations. This has been the caſe of many; and I pray God it may not be thus with any of you. But if there be any among you that were once under powerful awakenings; any that have cried out of *terrors on every ſide* (2); that have confeſſed your ſins, it may be, with greater freedom, and a more particular detail of circumſtances, than the miniſter who attended you could have deſired, and have reſolved againſt them with all the appearances of the moſt determinate purpoſe; and yet, after all, have *returned with the ſow that was waſhed, to her wallowing in the mire* (3): ſuch have peculiar reaſon to be alarmed and terrified. Every day of Divine patience toward ſuch is aſtoniſhing. And if to all this have been added the returns of danger, and ſignal interpoſitions of Providence for your deliverance, and yet there be no kindly impreſſions of penitence and gratitude on your hearts, they who know the particulars of the caſe, muſt ſurely look upon you with horror as well as with wonder: for what can one imagine of ſuch, but that they are given over by God to a darkneſs, which nothing but the flames of hell can enlighten, and a hardneſs, which nothing can penetrate but the ſharpneſs of unquenchable fire, and the gnawings of the never-dying worm?

But to return from a digreſſion, into which compaſſion towards ſuch a deplorable caſe has inſenſibly led me, I would farther obſerve, that as theſe various interpoſitions

(1) 1 Pet. i. 6. (2) Job xviii. 11. (3) 2 Pet. ii. 22.

of a remarkable Providence are often the means of working saving impressions on men's minds, so,

3. God is sometimes pleased to over-rule "little and inconsiderable incidents in life," as the occasion of accomplishing this happy change.

As the treasure of the Gospel was at first put *into earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power might* appear to *be of God, and not of man* (1): so God, to *make his* own *praise glorious* (2), is sometimes pleased to produce the most important effects, by causes which seem in themselves least considerable. And it is astonishing to see from how small and seemingly unpromising a seed this plant of Paradise springs up, and with how little cultivation too in some instances, after *Paul* had long attempted in vain to *plant*, and *Apollos* to *water* (3).—A few lines in the Bible, or any other good book, perhaps taken up by chance, shall be the instrument; and a passage, on which the eye glances without expectation or design, shall strike to the heart, like an arrow from the bow of God himself, after quivers of the most pointed and polished shafts have been exhausted in vain, though such shafts were most skilfully aimed, and most vigorously discharged. In other instances, a word dropped in conversation, and that perhaps no way remarkable either for its spirit or propriety, shall do that which the most solemn ordinances have not been capable of doing: an important encouragement, by the way, to abound in religious discourse, which God has sometimes been pleased to honour as the happy *means of saving a soul from death*, and laying a foundation for the delights of an everlasting friendship with those who have been so recovered.

4. Sometimes this great work is accomplished "by secret and immediate impressions from God upon the mind," without any visible means, instruments, or occasions at all.

These things do not frequently happen; nor does it seem fit they should, lest any should be encouraged to

(1) 2 Cor. iv. 7. (2) Psal. lxvi. 2. (3) 1 Cor. iii. 6, 7.

expect them in the neglect of the appointed means. Nevertheleſs, it is plain, in fact, that God is ſometimes pleaſed to go out of the common way; and his mighty hand is to be acknowledged in it. The reaſons are known to himſelf; and the praiſe is humbly to be aſcribed to him *who giveth not an account of any of his matters* (1).

It is not, to be ſure, ſo common now as it was in the days of Elihu, that God ſhould *ſpeak to men in a dream*, or *ſeal inſtructions* to them *in ſlumberings on their bed* (2); yet I have myſelf known ſeveral who have aſcribed their firſt religious awakenings to ſome awful dream, in which the ſolemnity of the judgment-day, or a view of the inviſible world, has been repreſented to them with unſpeakable terror; and others, to whom, when they have waked in the night, ſome words of Scripture have occurred with ſuch power, that they have not been able to divert their thoughts to any thing elſe; and that when they themſelves have not certainly known whether they were in the Bible or not.

I have known thoſe that, in the circle of their vain companions, and in the midſt of their ſenſual delights, have been ſtruck to the very heart with ſome ſuch Scripture as this: *to be carnally minded is death* (3): or ſuch a text as this has, on a ſudden, darted into their minds; *The wrath of God is revealed from heaven againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men* (4). Such paſſages have ſeemed to ring and thunder in their ears, till the ſound of their muſic, and the noiſe of their mirth have been quite overpowered, ſo that they have been driven from their revels to their knees, and have returned no more into *the paths of the deſtroyer*.

Yea, to add no more inſtances of this kind, I have known thoſe of diſtinguiſhed genius, polite manners, and great experience in human affairs, who, after having outgrown all the impreſſions of a religious education; after having been hardened, rather than ſubdued, by the moſt ſingular mercies, even various, repeated, and aſtoniſhing deliverances, which have appeared to themſelves no leſs than miraculous; after having lived for years

(1) Job xxxiii. 13. (2) Job xxxiii. 15, 16. (3) Rom. viii. 6.
(4) Rom. i. 18.

without God in the world, notoriouſly corrupt themſelves, and labouring to the utmoſt to corrupt others; have been ſtopped on a ſudden in the full career of their ſin, and have felt ſuch rays of the Divine preſence, and of redeeming love, darting in upon their minds, almoſt *like lightning from heaven*, as have at once rouſed, overpowered, and transformed them; ſo that they have come out of their chambers with an irreconcileable enmity to thoſe vices, to which, when they entered them, they were the tameſt and moſt abandoned ſlaves; and have appeared, from that very hour, the votaries, the patrons, the champions of religion; and after a courſe of the moſt reſolute attachment to it, in ſpite of all the reaſonings, or the railleries, the importunities, or the reproaches of its enemies, they have continued to this day ſome of its brighteſt ornaments: a change which I behold with equal wonder and delight, and which, if a nation ſhould join in deriding it, I would adore as *the finger of God*.

In mentioning theſe things thus publicly, I do indeed take an uncommon freedom, which ſome may perhaps cenſure; but ſo far as human teſtimony can give an aſſurance of truth, I may juſtly ſay, that *I ſpeak what I know, and teſtify what*, in its genuine and powerful effects, *I have* myſelf *ſeen* (1). And ſince the poſſibility of abuſing ſuch condeſcenſions of Divine mercy did not prevent their being granted, I cannot think it ought to engage me to be ſilent, when ſo natural an opportunity offered of declaring them, *to the glory of him who worketh all things according to the counſel of his own will* (2). Yet I muſt repeat the caution which I before ſuggeſted, that it would be madneſs for any to neglect God's appointed means of operation, on preſumption that they ſhall be added to the ſmall liſt of thoſe who have been ſuch uncommon and aſtoniſhing trophies of the efficacy and ſovereignty of Divine grace.

Theſe remarks muſt for the preſent ſuffice, with regard to the various occaſions by which God works upon men's minds; and I hope you will excuſe me, if in illuſtrating ſome of them, I have a little anticipated ſome things

(1) John iii. 11. (2) Epheſ. i. 11.

which might have been mentioned under the third head, in which I propoſed,

III. To conſider "ſome varieties obſervable in the manner in which Divine grace operates on the mind."

And this variety, by the way, will be obſervable in many inſtances where the occaſions are in general the ſame. Thus among thoſe that are awakened by the word of God, or by his providence, ſome are ſhaken by *ſtrong terrors*;—ſome are melted into *deep ſorrows*;—others are aſtoniſhed, as it were, and captivated at once, by the diſcovery of *the love of God in Chriſt*;——and others are led on by ſuch *gentle and gradual impreſſions*, that they can hardly recollect any remarkable circumſtance at all relating to the manner in which this bleſſed work was begun, or conducted in their ſouls.

1. Some converts are "awakened by ſtrong terrors."

It is obvious, that conviction of ſin, in ſome degree or other, is abſolutely neceſſary to make way for the entrance of the goſpel into the ſoul. But the degrees are various in different perſons; and as for thoſe of whom we now ſpeak, God *reproves them* aloud, *and ſets their ſins in order before them* (1), marſhals them in dreadful array, as the expreſſion imports; ſo that they ſeem like defenceleſs creatures ſurrounded with a whole hoſt of enemies, whoſe weapons are raiſed for their deſtruction. Yea, God himſelf, the great, the terrible, the eternal, and omnipotent God, ſeems to *ſet them up as a mark for thoſe arrows* (2), *the poiſon of which drinketh up their ſpirits* (3); and, as he himſelf expreſſes it, *He is unto them as a bear*, or *a lion*, ready to tear and *rent the* very *caul of their heart* (4). They *come*, as it were, to the trembling and terrifying *mountain* of *Sinai*, to *blackneſs, and darkneſs, and tempeſt* (5). The conviction of guilt is attended with ſuch a ſenſe of the demerit of ſin, as fills them with horror and aſtoniſhment, and engages them to wiſh, *in the bitterneſs of their ſouls*, that they had *never been born*. They are left for a time, and that perhaps for weeks and months, to be, as it were, deafened with

(1) Pſal. l. 21. (2) Lam. iii. 12. (3) Job vi. 4.
(4) Hoſ. xiii. 8. (5) Heb. xii. 18.

the loud thunders of the law: *a dreadful ſound*, as Eliphas expreſſes it, *is in their ears* (1), even the ſentence of their own damnation; and the awful curſe of an almighty, ſin-avenging God *comes into their bowels like water, and like oil into their bones* (2). They are filled with ſuch deep remorſe for their paſt ſins, that they verily think no iniquity was ever like theirs, and that no puniſhment will be like theirs. They hardly ſee a glimmering of hope that they ſhall obtain deliverance, but expect, in a very little while, to be ſealed up under wrath, if they are not already ſo. When they hear the offers and the promiſes of the Goſpel, they can apply none of them to themſelves, and find comfort in none: but every threatening and every curſe of the book of God ſeems to have been written as their intended portion. And thus, perhaps, they continue for weeks or for months together, expecting every day and every night that *deſtruction from God*, which is now a *terror to them* (3), ſhould utterly *ſwallow them up*, and *leave them neither root nor branch*, neither comfort nor hope (4). *The law is a ſchoolmaſter to bring them to Chriſt* (5), and it ſcourges them with the moſt rigorous diſcipline: yea, the infernal lion roars over them, though he is not permitted to devour them: he particularly terrifies them when they think of approaching God, as if they were to meet with ſome peculiar danger there, where alone they can find their relief: or, if they do in broken accents utter their prayer before God, it ſeems to be *ſhut out* (6), and they are apprehenſive that it is *turned into ſin* (7). Yet there is one thing to be obſerved in the midſt of this ſcene of horror, and it is a circumſtance of great importance; "that they juſtify God when he ſeems moſt inexorable, and ſubſcribe to that ſentence as righteous which dooms them to eternal ruin."

2. Others are "melted into deep ſorrows."

Their *eyes run down with tears*; and they are ready to wiſh that their *head were waters, and* their *eyes fountains, that they might* continue to *weep day and night* (8). They

(1) Job xv. 21. (2) Pſal. cix. 18. (3) Job xxxi. 23.
(4) Mal. iv. 1. (5) Gal. iii. 24. (6) Lam. iii. 8.
(7) Pſal. cix. 7. (8) Jer. ix. 1, 18.

ſee the evil of ſin, and the miſery to which it has reduced them, in a moſt deplorable view; and it may be, while thoſe deſcribed under the former head are ready to tremble becauſe they cannot weep, theſe are ready to weep, becauſe they cannot tremble. They lament, among other things, the want of thoſe ſtrong horrors which ſome have felt: they cry out, "*Wo is me, for I am undone* (1); I have *deſtroyed myſelf*, and in myſelf is not my *help* found (2):" and it may be, they are a conſiderable time before they can perſuade themſelves there is any help for them, even in God. They know there is help in him through Chriſt for penitent and believing ſinners: but they cannot eaſily be convinced that they believe, becauſe they do not feel that confident truſt which ſome others have much ſooner been brought to; and they are afraid, leſt whatever they experience, which looks like repentance, ſhould be only the falſe appearance of it, proceeding from mere ſelf-love and a natural dread of future miſery. They dwell perpetually on the dark ſide of things: they read over the catalogue of their iniquities again and again, and attend to thoſe paſſages in which *the wrath of God is revealed from heaven againſt* every kind and degree of *ſin* (3); while they are ſlow of heart to admit thoſe reviving conſolations which the various rich and precious promiſes of the Goſpel are ſo admirably well calculated to adminiſter.

The ſtate of ſuch ſouls, when they are firſt ſavingly enlightened, is like that of the earth, when fogs and miſts have veiled the face of the ſun after it is riſen. But it very often happens, with reſpect to ſuch ſouls, that when theſe miſts are at length diſperſed, a very bright and cheerful day opens: they are comforted by the warmer beams of the *Sun of Righteouſneſs*, according to the hours in which they have been beclouded, and are *made glad according to the days in which* they were *afflicted* (4): and going on *to fear the Lord*, and to *obey the voice of his ſervant*, though they have long *walked in darkneſs, and ſeen no light*, they are at length encouraged by his Spirit enforcing the exhortations of his word, to

(1) Iſa. vi. 5. (2) Hoſ. xiii. 9. (3) Rom. i. 18.
(4) Pſal xc. 15.

truſt in the name of the Lord, and ſtay themſelves upon their God (1).

3. Some are "captivated with aſtoniſhing and delightful views of the love of God in Chriſt."

There is always, as we obſerved before, in the awakened ſoul, ſome conviction of ſin and apprehenſion of danger; nevertheleſs, there are inſtances in which God heals almoſt as ſoon as he wounds, and ſpeaks peace almoſt as ſoon as he ſpeaks trouble. He graciouſly ſhortens, to ſome ſouls, the pangs of the new birth, and *gives them beauty for aſhes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praiſe for the ſpirit of heavineſs* (2). The news of ſalvation by the blood, and righteouſneſs, and grace of Chriſt, is received with ſo thankful a ſenſe, with ſo joyful a compliance, that the ſoul, feeling beyond all doubt the cordial ſincerity with which it embraces the offer, is filled with *joy unſpeakable, and full of glory* (3): the heart *does magnify the Lord, and the ſpirit rejoices in God its Saviour* (4).

This was remarkably the caſe of the jailer, who in the very night in which he was converted, that ſame night in which the foundation of his houſe had been ſhaken, and his own ſoul too ſhaken, by an earthquake, ſo that he had endeavoured to lay violent hands on himſelf: yet, I ſay, that very night, before the day appeared, having been directed to *believe on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, that he might *be ſaved*, and been enabled, by Divine grace, to comply with the exhortation, it is added concerning him, that *he rejoiced, believing in God with all his houſe* (5).——Thus too the Theſſalonians, though they *received the word in much affliction*, and ran the riſk of loſing their poſſeſſions and their lives in adhering to it, yet received it *with joy of the Holy Ghoſt* (6). And though I cannot ſay this is God's moſt ordinary way of dealing, and though I fear the counterfeit appearance of ſuch a work as this often leaves men in the number of thoſe whom our Lord repreſents by *ſtony ground hearers* (7); yet it is certain, ſome inſtances of this kind are ſtill to be

(1) Iſa. l. 10. (2) Iſa. lxi. 3. (3) 1 Pet. i. 8.
(4) Luke i. 46, 47. (5) Acts xvi. 34. (6) 1 Theſ. i. 6.
(7) Mat. xiii. 20, 21.

found. But then I must observe, this is a joy attended with the deepest humility, and animates the soul to the most ardent and affectionate resolution of *walking worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness* (1).

4. Others, and these perhaps the greatest part of such as are religiously educated, are "led on by such gentle and insensible degrees, that they can hardly recollect any remarkable circumstances that have attended their conversion, nor can certainly fix on the particular time of it."

God is sometimes, as in the preceding instances, *in the whirlwind, the earthquake, and the fire;* but he is also frequently *in the still small voice* (2). The operations of the Holy Spirit on the soul are often, and perhaps generally, of such a nature, that it is difficult exactly to distinguish them from the rational exercise of our own thoughts, because the Spirit operates by suggesting rational views of things, and awakening rational affections. For whatever some have vainly and dangerously insinuated, nothing is so rational as the sentiments and temper which prevail in renewed souls, and to which it is the work of God's regenerating Spirit to bring them.

These operations, where there is a religious education, often begin very early: but then, in some degree, the impressions wear off from the weak and flexible mind; and perhaps there are various instances in which they alternately revive and decay again. And this vicissitude of affectionate applications to religion (under moving ordinances, afflictions, or deliverances) and of backslidings and remissness in it, may be permitted, with respect to many, to continue for a long time. At length, under the various methods of Providence and Grace, the soul arrives to greater steadiness, and a more habitual victory over the remainders of indwelling sin: but it may be exceeding hard, and perhaps absolutely impossible, to determine concerning some remarkable scenes through which it has passed, whether such a one in particular, perhaps the last which strikes the memory, were the season of its new birth; or whether it were merely a recov-

(1) Col. i. 10, 11. (2) 1 Kings xix. 11, 12.

ery from such a degree of negligence and remissness, as may possibly be consistent with real religion, and be found in a regenerate soul.

These balancings of backsliding and recovery often occasion very great perplexity; and such sort of converts are frequently much discouraged, because they cannot give the history of their religious experiences in so clear and distinct a manner as others; and particularly, because they have not passed through such violent terrors and agitations of mind as many, who were perhaps once sunk into much deeper degeneracy have done. Nevertheless, where there is a consciousness of an undissembled love to God, an unreserved devotedness to his service, a cordial trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, and a sincere affection to mankind in general, and especially *to those of the household of faith*, a man ought not to perplex himself on this account. For as every man knows he was born into the world, by a consciousness that he now lives and acts here, though it is impossible he should remember any thing of the time or circumstances in which he was first introduced into it; so may a Christian be assured, that some way or another he was *born of the Spirit*, if he can trace its genuine fruits and efficacious influences in a renewed heart and life.

I have thus laid down several particulars, which appeared to me important, in order to illustrate that diversity which is observable in the methods of the Divine operation on the heart; and they will naturally lead us to these three reflections, with which I shall conclude my present Discourse. Let us not make *our own experiences* a standard for *others*;—nor the *experiences of others* a standard for *ourselves*;—nor let us be unwilling, in a prudent manner, to communicate our spiritual experiences to each other.

[1.] Let us not make our own experiences a standard for others.

Let us remember that there is, as we have heard, a *diversity of operations*; and that many a person may be a dear child of God, who was not born just with those circumstances which attended our own regeneration. Others may not so particularly have discerned the time,

the occaſion, the progreſs of the change; they may not have felt all that we felt, either in the way of extraordinary terror or extraordinary comfort; and yet, perhaps, may equal, or even exceed us in that holy temper, to which it was the great intention of our Heavenly Father, by one method or another, to bring all his children. Nay, I will add, that Chriſtians of a very amiable and honourable character may expreſs themſelves but in a dark, and ſomething of an improper manner, concerning the doctrine of regeneration, and may, in conſcience, ſcruple the uſe of ſome phraſes relating to it, which we judge to be exceeding ſuitable; and yet, that very ſcruple which diſpleaſes us may proceed from a reverence for God and truth, and from ſuch a tenderneſs of heart as is the effect of his renewing grace. We ſhould therefore be very cautious how we judge each other, and take upon us to reject thoſe whom perhaps God has received.

I remember good Dr. Owen, whoſe candour was, in many reſpects, very remarkable, carries this ſo far, as ſomewhere to ſay, "that ſome may, perhaps, have experienced the ſaving influences of the Holy Spirit on their hearts, who do not in words acknowledge the neceſſity, or even the reality of thoſe influences." Judging men's hearts, and judging their ſtates, is a work for which we are ſo ill qualified, that we have reaſon to be exceeding thankful it is not aſſigned to us. And when we are entering into ſuch an examination of their character, as our duty may in ſome particular circumſtances ſeem to require, we ſhould be very ſolicitous that we do not lay down arbitrary and precarious rules. It ſeems, indeed, that ſo far as we can learn it, we may more ſafely judge by their preſent temper and conduct, than by the hiſtory of any thing which has formerly paſſed in their minds.

And let me add it as a neceſſary caution here, that they who never felt any of the extraordinary emotions of mind, which have been deſcribed under ſome former heads, but have been brought to religion by leſs obſervable methods, perhaps by calm, rational views of it (of whom I believe there are great numbers) ſhould be very cautious that they do not raſhly cenſure ſuch things as I have now been repreſenting, as if they were mere enthuſiaſm. I cannot but think this a criminal

limiting the Holy One of Israel (1), and fear it will be found a boldneſs highly diſpleaſing to him, and very injurious to the ſouls of thoſe who allow themſelves in it, and of others too, if they be ſuch as are employed in the miniſterial work: not now to inſiſt on what, in compariſon of this, is but a ſmall matter, the apparent rudeneſs and petulancy of contradicting facts ſo well atteſted as many of this kind have been, and running counter to the ſolid effects which ſuch impreſſions have produced. The raſhneſs which prevails under different forms among men of the moſt oppoſite ſentiments is too obvious; but if we would give ourſelves leave calmly to weigh and conſider matters, our ſpirits would be rendered on all ſides more moderate, and many harſh and haſty cenſures would be ſuſpended, which at preſent prove very little more than the ignorance, pride, and folly of thoſe that paſs them.

[2.] Let us not make the experiences of others a ſtandard for ourſelves.

This is frequently the caſe, and eſpecially with thoſe who are naturally of a humble and tender temper; for whoſe peace and comfort therefore one cannot but be peculiarly ſolicitous. Having heard of ſome extraordinary experiences of others, they are ready to imagine, becauſe they can trace nothing correſpondent to theſe in their own minds, that they are utter ſtrangers to real regeneration, and have nothing more than ſuch religious notions and forms, as natural men may eaſily learn of each other.

But what I have now been ſaying of the variety of the Divine operations on the heart, affords a ſolid anſwer to ſuch ſcruples, when they ariſe in a pious mind. Reflect, on this occaſion, how it is in the works of nature: there we know that God works in all, ſo that he is the life and exiſtence of the whole creation; and yet, as an excellent writer expreſſes it, "He alone ſeems not to work:" his agency is ſo inviſible and ſecret, that did not reaſon and ſcripture join to teach it, one might live a great many years in the world without knowing any thing more, than that ſuch and ſuch effects are produced

(1) Pſalm lxxviii. 41.

by correſpondent ſecond cauſes: though in ſtrict propriety of ſpeech they are no cauſes at all, but owe all their efficacy to the Divine preſence and operation. Senſe tells us that the ſun enlightens the earth, and warms it; that the rain waters it, the ſeeds produce vegetables, and the animals continue their proper race: but that God is *the Father of lights* (1), that he *has prepared the light and the ſun* (2); that he *viſits the earth, and cauſes rain to deſcend into the furrows thereof* (3), ſo as to *make the graſs to grow for cattle*, and corn *and herb for the ſervice of man* (4); that he *ſends forth his Spirit*, and the animal race is *created*, and *the face of the earth renewed* (5); this, I ſay, is what multitudes of the human race are not aware of; becauſe in all theſe things he acts in a gentle, ſtated, and regular manner, and employs inferior agents as the inſtruments of his providence. And juſt thus gentle, ſilent, and regular are the influences of his Spirit upon men's ſouls; and it is often impoſſible exactly to diſtinguiſh them from the teachings of parents and miniſters, and from thoſe reflections which ſeem to ſpring from our own minds, though it is *he that gives us counſel*, while *our reins inſtruct us* in our ſecret muſings (6), and that teaches us to profit by the leſſons which others give us.

Be not therefore ſurpriſed, and be not dejected, though you cannot aſſign the place, the time, the manner, in which your converſion began; and though you are ſtrangers to the terrors, the ſorrows, or the tranſports of joy, which you have heard one and another expreſs. *The wind bloweth where it liſteth*, and the Spirit diſpenſes his influences where and when, and in what meaſure and degree he pleaſes: but while the way and manner of his operation may be ſecret and unknown, the effects of it are ſenſible and evident: and as with regard to the *wind, thou hearest the ſound thereof, but canſt not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; ſo is every one that is born of the Spirit* (7). You may not certainly know when to fix the preciſe time of your converſion, or how to trace the particular ſteps by which it has been brought to paſs; for *as*

(1) Jam. i. 17. (2) Pſal. lxxiv. 16. (3) Pſal. lxv. 9, 10.
(4) Pſal. civ. 14. (5) Pſal. civ. 30. (6) Pſal. xvi. 7.
(7) John iii. 8.

thou knoweſt not what is the way of the Spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child; even ſo thou knoweſt not the works of God who maketh all (1). But though you cannot trace the proceſs of the operation, the effects of it are ſuch as you may feel within you, and *by its fruits* it will be *known* (2). It is indeed deſirable to be able to give an account of the beginning and the progreſs of the work of God upon your ſouls, as ſome that are regenerate can do; but this is not neceſſary to evidence the truth of grace. Happy is he who in this caſe can ſay as the blind man in the goſpel, *One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I ſee* (3). For as you know that there is fire when you ſee the flame, though you know not how or when it began; ſo alſo it may be diſcerned, that you have really undergone a ſaving change, though you know not how or when it was wrought in your hearts. If you anſwer the characters I laid down in the preceding diſcourſes, as eſſential to the truly regenerate (which are all comprehended in repentance and faith, producing an unfeigned love and uniform obedience) you may trace the cauſe from the effect with far greater certainty than you could have traced ſuch an effect, as what would infallibly follow from any cauſe which you could have perceived in your minds previous to it. There may be great awakenings, violent terrors, and extatic joys, where there is no ſaving work of God on the ſoul; but where the Divine image is produced, and the ſoul is actually renewed, we are ſure (as was before obſerved) that grace has been working, though we know not when, or where, or how. And therefore, on the whole, guarding againſt both theſe extremes, and to cure them both,

[3.] Let Chriſtians, in a prudent and humble manner, be ready to communicate their religious experiences to each other.

God undoubtedly intended that the variety of his operations ſhould be obſerved and owned in the world of grace, as well as in that of nature; and as theſe things paſs in the ſecret receſſes of men's hearts, how ſhould

(1) Eccl. xi. 5. (2) Matt. vii. 20. (3) John ix. 25.

they be known, unleſs they will themſelves communicate and declare them? And let me caution you againſt that ſtrange averſeneſs to all freedoms of this kind, which, eſpecially in perſons of a reſerved temper, is ſo ready to prevail. Let not any think it beneath them to do it. You well know that David, who was not only a man of an admirable genius, but a mighty prince too, was far from thinking it ſo; on the contrary, deeply impreſſed with the Divine condeſcenſion in all the gracious viſits he had received from him, he calls, as it were, the whole pious world around him, that they might be edified and comforted by the relation: *Come*, ſays he, *and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he has done for my ſoul* (1). He proclaimed it, not with his voice and harp alone, but with his immortal pen: and many other noble and excellent perſons concurred with him; and the invaluable treaſure of their experiences, in as great a variety of circumſtances as we can well imagine, is tranſmitted to us in the book of Pſalms. Can any juſt reaſon then be aſſigned, why they, who live under a nobler diſpenſation, and a more abundant communication of the Spirit, ſhould be entirely ſilent on this ſubject?

There may indeed be an over-forwardneſs, which is the apparent effect of pride and ſelf-conceit, and which, with thinking people, may bring even the ſincerity of the ſpeaker into queſtion, or put his indiſcretion beyond all poſſibility of being queſtioned. But it would be very unreaſonable to argue, that becauſe a thing may be done ill, it cannot poſſibly be done well.

Why may not intimate friends open their hearts to each other on ſuch delightful topics? Why may not they, who have met with any thing peculiar of this kind, communicate it to their miniſter? And though I muſt in conſcience declare againſt making it abſolutely and univerſally a term of communion, yet I am well aſſured that in ſome inſtances a prudent and ſerious communication of theſe things to a Chriſtian ſociety, when a perſon is to be admitted into fellowſhip with it, has often anſwered very valuable ends. By this means God has

(1) Pſal. lxvi. 16.

the honour of his own work; and others have the pleaſure of ſympathizing with the relator, both in his ſorrows and his joys: they derive from hence ſome additional ſatisfaction as to his fitneſs for an approach to the Lord's table; they learn with pleaſure the Divine bleſſing which attends the adminiſtration of ordinances among them; and make obſervations and remarks which may aſſiſt them in offering their addreſſes to God, and in giving proper advices to others who are in circumſtances like thoſe related. To all which we may add, that the miniſters of Chriſt do, in particular, learn what may be a means of forming them to a more experimental manner of preaching, as well as in many inſtances diſcover thoſe, before unknown, tokens of ſucceſs which may ſtrengthen their hands in the work of their great Maſter.

It is by frequent converſations of this kind, that I have learnt many of the particulars on which I have grounded the preceding diſcourſe. I hope therefore you will excuſe me, if, on ſo natural an occaſion, I have borne my public teſtimony to what has been ſo edifying to me, both as a miniſter and a Chriſtian. And the tender regard which I have for young perſons training up for the work of the miniſtry, and my ardent deſire that they may learn the language of Sion, and have "thoſe peculiar advantages which nothing but an acquaintance with caſes, and an obſervation on facts can give," has been a further inducement to me to add this reflection, with which I conclude my diſcourſe; humbly hoping that what you have heard upon this occaſion will, by the Divine bleſſing, furniſh out agreeable matter for ſuch converſation as I have now recommended, to the glory of God, and to the advancement of religion among you. *Amen!*

SERMON IX.

DIRECTIONS TO AWAKENED SINNERS.

ACTS IX. 6.

And he, trembling and aſtoniſhed, ſaid, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?

THESE are the words of Saul, *who alſo is called Paul* (1), when he was ſtricken to the ground as he was going to Damaſcus; and any one who had looked upon him in his preſent circumſtances, and knew nothing more of him than that view, in compariſon with his paſt life, could have given, would have imagined him one of the moſt miſerable creatures that ever lived upon earth, and would have expected that he ſhould very ſoon have been numbered amongſt the moſt miſerable of thoſe in hell. He was engaged in a courſe of ſuch ſavage cruelty, as can, upon no principle of common morality, be vindicated, even though the Chriſtians had been as much miſtaken, as he raſhly and fooliſhly concluded they were. After having *dragged many of them into priſon*, and *given his voice againſt* ſome *that were put to death*, he *perſecuted* others *into ſtrange cities*; and had now *obtained a commiſſion from the Sanhedrim at Jeruſalem* to carry this holy, or rather this impious war into *Damaſcus* (2), and to bring all the proſelytes to the religion of the bleſſed Jeſus bound from thence to Jeruſalem (3): probably that they might there be animadverted upon with greater ſeverity

(1) Acts xiii. 9. (2) Acts xxvi. 10—12. (3) Acts ix. 2.

than could ſafely have been attempted by the Jews in ſo diſtant a city, under a foreign governor.

But behold, *as he was in the way*, Jeſus interpoſes, clothed with a luſtre exceeding that of the *ſun at noon* (1). He ſtrikes him down from the beaſt on which he rode, and lays him proſtrate on the ground, calling to him with a voice far more dreadful than that of thunder, *Saul, Saul, why perſecuteſt thou me* (2)?

Any one would have imagined, from the circumſtances in which he now beheld Saul, that Divine vengeance had already begun to ſeize him, and that full execution would quickly have been done. But *God's ways are not as our ways, nor are his thoughts as our thoughts* (3). Chriſt laid him almoſt as low as hell, that he might raiſe him as high as the third heaven; of which he afterwards gave him a view in viſion, to anticipate his reception into it (4). This day of his terror and aſtoniſhment was, in a nobler ſenſe than any other, the day of his birth; for he is brought to bow himſelf at the foot of an injured Saviour, to offer him, as it were, a blank upon which to write his own terms of peace; and as ſoon as he heard that this glorious perſon was *Jeſus*, *whom*, in his members, *he* had ſo long *perſecuted*, he makes his ſubmiſſion in theſe lively, comprehenſive words, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do!* —This was not a time for a long ſpeech; but he that diſcerns all the ſecret receſſes of the ſpirit, knew theſe few words were full of a moſt important meaning, and expreſſed not only a grief of heart for all that he had before been doing againſt Chriſt and his kingdom, but the ſincereſt reſolution for the future to employ himſelf in his ſervice, waiting only the intimations of his wiſe and gracious will, as to the moſt proper and acceptable manner of beginning the attempt.

There is, methinks, a poignant kind of eloquence in this ſhort expreſſion, far beyond what any paraphraſe upon it can give: and our compaſſionate Lord accepted this ſurrender. All his former rebellions were no more

(1) Acts xxvi. 13. (2) Acts ix. 4. (3) Iſa. lv. 8.
(4) 2 Cor. xii. 2.

remembered againſt him; and before he roſe from the ground, to which he fell on ſo terrible an occaſion, Chriſt gave him an intimation, not only that his forfeited life ſhould be ſpared, ſo that he ſhould get ſafe into the city to which he was bound, but that he ſhould there be inſtructed in that ſervice which Jeſus, whom he had perſecuted, would now condeſcend to receive at his hands.

I repreſent the caſe thus largely, becauſe I hope it is a caſe, which, in ſome meaſure, ſuits the experience of ſome that hear me this evening. Paul tells us, is was *for this reaſon*, among others, that he himſelf *obtained mercy*, though he was *the chief of ſinners, that in him, as the chief, Jeſus Chriſt might ſhew forth all long-ſuffering, for a pattern to them who ſhould afterwards believe* (1).

Is there then, in this aſſembly, any awakened and convinced ſinner; any one that, apprized of his folly, and ſenſible of his miſery, is deſirous to fall at the foot of Chriſt, and ſay with Saul, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? That which I ſee not, teach thou me; and wherein I have done iniquity, I will do ſo no more* (2)!—To ſuch would I now eſpecially addreſs: and while I put the queſtion, Is there any ſuch among us? I would fain perſuade myſelf, there are ſeveral: for I humbly hope, that all the labours that have been beſtowed in the preceding Diſcourſes are not in vain, nor all the prayers that have been offered for their ſucceſs in vain; prayers which, I doubt not, have been carried by many of you into your families and your cloſets, as well as jointly preſented to God in this public aſſembly. Truſting, therefore, that it is thus with ſome, and praying that it may be a more frequent caſe, I proceed,

Sixthly, to give ſome directions to ſuch who are awakened by Divine grace to a ſenſe of their miſery in an unregenerate ſtate, and are brought to deſire recovery from it.

To ſuch I propoſe to give directions: and to what purpoſe would it be to undertake to offer them to any others? Who would pretend to teach thoſe who are unconcerned about their ſalvation, what methods they are to take in order to their becoming truly regenerate?

(1) 1 Tim. i. 15, 16. (2) Job xxxiv. 32.

This, methinks, would be like giving directions how thoſe might learn to write who do not deſire it, and will not take a pen into their hands. All I could ſay to ſuch, while they continue in this character, would vaniſh into empty air: It would not, probably, be ſo much as obſerved and remembered. I ſpeak therefore to awakened ſouls, and it is pleaſant to addreſs ſuch on this head. Ananias undoubtedly undertook this meſſage to Saul with cheerfulneſs, to tell him what Chriſt would have him to do: and I would with pleaſure and cheerfulneſs engage in the like work; humbly hoping, that ſome will hear with obſervation and attention, will hear for themſelves, and ſo *hear for their good* (1). And to this purpoſe let me adviſe you—to attend to the impreſſions that have been made upon you with great ſerioufneſs—to break off every thing that is contrary to them—to ſeek for further knowledge in religious matters—to pour out your ſouls before God in earneſt prayer—to communicate the ſtate of your caſe to ſome experienced Chriſtian—to acquaint yourſelves with ſuch as are much in your own circumſtances—to fly immediately to Chriſt, as ready to receive all that come to him—to dedicate yourſelves to him, and to his ſervice, in the moſt ſolemn manner—to arm yourſelves to encounter with the greateſt difficulties in your Chriſtian courſe—and finally, to take every ſtep in this attempt with a deep ſenſe of your own weakneſs, and a humble dependence upon Divine grace to be communicated to you as the matter requires. —Theſe are the ſeveral directions I would offer to you: and may they be impreſſed in ſuch a manner on your ſouls, that none of you may *loſe the things* that have been *wrought* (2): but by the effectual *working* of the *mighty power* of *God* (3), ſuch as he graciouſly has been pleaſed to *bring to the birth*, may be *brought forth* (4), and ſuch as are awakened may be ſavingly renewed!

1. I would adviſe you to "attend to the impreſſions made upon you with great ſerioufneſs."

(1) Job v. 27. (2) 2 John ver. 8. (3) Epheſ. i. 19.
(4) Iſa. lxvi. 9.

They may perhaps take you a little off the world and its concernments; and some will blame you for suffering such an interruption; but regard not that censure. The time will come, if you pursue these things aright, when renewed diligence, prudence, and the Divine blessing, will amply make amends for any present hindrance which these impressions may occasion. And if it should be otherwise, *were there not a cause?* If a man seized with a threatening distemper should choose, for a little while, to lay aside his usual business, that he might attend to the care of his health, before the symptoms grew incurable, would any body blame him for this? On the contrary, would it not be looked upon as acting a very wise, prudent, and necessary part? Much more may be said here. *It is not a light thing for you, because it is your life* (1): And if *the life* is *more than meat, and the body than raiment* (2), then surely the soul is more to be regarded than either. And therefore what you do in your worldly affairs, do moderately; and do not grudge that retirement which is so necessary in such a tender circumstance as this.—I may apply to you, on this occasion, those words of Solomon; *Through desire a man having separated himself, seeketh and intermeddleth with all wisdom* (3). If you desire to attain Divine wisdom, you must separate yourself from all other things to pursue it. And it is the more necessary to attend to this now, because the tempter may probably contrive to lay some more than ordinary avocation in your way, at a time when the interest of his kingdom requires you should be diverted from prosecuting those views which are presenting themselves to you, and by which you may so probably be rescued out of his hands, and put forever out of his power.

2. Let me advise you to "break off every thing which is contrary to such impressions as these."

Sin will immediately appear to have been your disease and your ruin: and therefore, if ever you hope for recovery, you must resolutely break with that; not merely with this or that particular evil, but with every sin; and that not only for a little while, but entirely and forever.

(1) Deut. xxxii. 47. (2) Mat. vi. 25. (3) Prov. xviii. 1.

A mortal, irreconcileable war muſt be declared againſt it. Every fleſhly luſt muſt be denied, every immoral practice, for which your heart may at any time ſmite you, muſt be reformed; and if ever you expect to reap mercy and life, you muſt, as the Prophet expreſſes it, *break up your fallow ground* (1), and *not ſow among thorns* (2). For *righteouſneſs has no fellowſhip with unrighteouſneſs, and light no communion with darkneſs* (3). And you may be aſſured, that as all ſin grieves the Spirit of God, and ſtrengthens the heavy fetters which lie upon the ſoul; ſo thoſe ſins which are committed after theſe awakenings and convictions, have a peculiar guilt attending them, and do greater *deſpite to the Spirit of grace* (4), in proportion to the degree in which his motions on the ſoul have been vigorous and warm.

3. "Seek further knowledge, eſpecially from the word and ordinances of God."

The influences of Divine grace are not to be conſidered as a blind impulſe: but God's Spirit works on the ſpirit of man, as one rational being on another. The Apoſtle therefore puts the queſtion with great reaſon, *How ſhall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard* (5)? And as ſome knowledge is the foundation on which the Spirit of God ordinarily operates in men's hearts; ſo in proportion to the degree in which you attain further light into the ſcheme of the Goſpel, and of ſalvation by Chriſt, it may be expected you will be more impreſſed by it. The mention of this is ſo much the more neceſſary, as miſtaken notions of religion often expoſe people on the one hand, to great perplexities, and on the other, betray them into a falſe peace, which one way or another *will be bitterneſs in the end*.—Come, therefore, to the houſe of God, and attend ſpiritual preaching. The queſtion is not about forms, but things. Be not therefore overſcrupulous about what is merely circumſtantial in religion, on the one hand or the other: but where you find moſt ſpiritual light and improvement, there chooſe generally to attend: not confining religion to any particular party, nor judging thoſe who differ from you in their

(1) Hoſ. x. 12. (2) Jer. iv. 3. (3) 2 Cor. vi. 14.
(4) Heb. x. 29. (5) Rom. x. 14.

ſentiment or practice; but calmly and humbly ſeeking your own edification, leaving others to ſeek theirs where they are perſuaded, in the ſight of God, they may moſt probably find it.—Above all, remember, in this circumſtance, to make *the word of God the man of your counſel* (1), and to judge of what you read and hear by the tenor of that, as the oracle of eternal truth; always attending the reading of it with earneſt prayer to God for the illumination of his Spirit, as I ſhall afterwards more particularly direct.—No other books are to be ſet up in oppoſition to this, or in compariſon with it; yet let it be your care, in ſubordination to Scripture, to ſtudy the writings of thoſe faithful ſervants of God in latter ages, who themſelves manifeſt a ſenſe of practical religion. Eſpecially endeavour to find out and peruſe thoſe writings which treat of converſion and regeneration, and which contain advice ſuited to your caſe. Bleſſed be God, our language abounds with ſuch: and every truly Chriſtian miniſter will be glad to direct you to them, and ſo far as he has a convenient opportunity to furniſh you with them.

4. "Pour out your ſoul before God in earneſt prayer."

You cannot be unacquainted with the many promiſes God has made in Scripture for the encouragement of thoſe who deſire to pray to him in the ſincerity of their hearts. You know into how little a compaſs Chriſt has crowded together three equivalent promiſes; *Aſk, and it ſhall be given you; ſeek, and ye ſhall find; knock, and it ſhall be opened unto you* (2); and you cannot but remember the threefold encouragement, from the ſucceſs of thoſe who have recourſe to this expedient, which he has added in the moſt expreſs and general terms: *For every one that aſketh, receiveth; and he that ſeeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it ſhall be opened* (3). Go, therefore, in a cheerful dependence upon this promiſe: go, and try the truth of it.—Whither ſhould a creature in ſuch circumſtances go, but to that God, who has *the hearts* of all *in his hand as the rivers of water, and turns them whitherſoever he will* (4)? And who ſhould go to him, rather than you?—And

(1) Pſal. cxix. 24. (2) Matt. vii. 7. (3) Verſe 8.
(4) Prov. xxi. 1.

in what circumſtances ſhould a diſtreſſed creature rather think of looking and crying to him, than in theſe; where it ſees itſelf ſurrounded with ſo much danger, and yet feels an inward earneſt deſire, not only of deliverance, but of holineſs too?——Go, therefore, and caſt yourſelf at the feet of God this very evening; do it as ſoon as you return to your habitations; and if you cannot put your thoughts and deſires into words, at leaſt ſigh and groan before the Lord. Mourn, if you cannot pray; and mourn that you cannot; or rather be aſſured, that unutterable groanings have ſometimes the greateſt efficacy, and prove the moſt prevailing eloquence.

It will be no wonder at all, if in theſe circumſtances Satan ſhould endeavour to terrify you. It is his common practice. So many ſouls have vanquiſhed him upon their knees, that he dreads and hates the poſture: but draw an argument from that very oppoſition to make you ſo much the more eager and importunate; and *when your heart is overwhelmed within you*, fly *unto the rock that is higher than you* (1).

I will add, Be not diſcouraged, though help be not immediately imparted. Though you may ſeem to be *caſt out of* God's *ſight*, yet *look again towards his holy temple* (2): though you may ſeem to *cry from the deeps*, and almoſt *from the belly of hell* (3), the bowels of a heavenly Father will yearn over you as returning prodigals; and I doubt not you will meet with the reception that Ephraim found, when God ſaw him *bemoaning* and humbling *himſelf*, becauſe he had been *as a bullock unaccuſtomed to the yoke*; when he cried, *Turn thou me, and I ſhall be turned: for thou art the Lord my God*; his heavenly Father anſwers him in theſe moſt affectionate words; attend to them, O thou returning ſinner, for thy comfort in this hour of diſtreſs! *Is Ephraim my dear ſon? is he a pleaſant child? for ſince I ſpake againſt him, I do earneſtly remember him ſtill; therefore my bowels are troubled for him, and I will ſurely have mercy upon him, ſaith the Lord* (4).

(1) Pſal. lxi. 2. (2) Jonah ii. 4. (3) Verſe 2.
(4) Jer. xxxi. 18, 20.

5. I would adviſe you farther, that you "immediately communicate the ſtate of your caſe to ſome experienced Chriſtian."

I know there is a backwardneſs in perſons of your circumſtances to do it; and it has been ſurpriſing to me, to learn from the converſe of ſome, who, in this reſpect, have afterwards grown wiſer, how long they have been pining away in their ſorrows before they could be perſuaded to conſult their miniſters or Chriſtian friends. It is a ſtratagem of Satan, againſt which I would by all means caution you. And one would think your own reaſon ſhould ſuggeſt ſome very obvious advantages attending the method I propoſe, of opening your caſe freely to thoſe whom you think to be more experienced in theſe things. The impreſſion may be revived upon your own ſouls, even by the account you give them: and their advice may be exceeding uſeful to you to guard you againſt the wiles of the enemy which they have known, though hitherto you are ſtrangers to them; and to guide you into ſuch methods as, by the Divine bleſſing, may farther promote that good work which ſeems, in any meaſure, to have been begun within you. You may alſo depend upon it that it will engage their prayers for you; which, in this caſe, may have great prevalency. And it will alſo naturally lead them to inſpect your conduct: and if they ſee you afterwards in danger of being drawn aſide, they may remind you of the hopes once entertained, and the impreſſions once made upon your mind.—In this reſpect you may hope, that by *walking with wiſe men* you *will be* yet *wiſer* (1); and will ſoon find how happy an exchange you make, when you give up your vain, and perhaps wicked companions, that you may become *the companion of them that fear God, and that keep his precepts* (2); and may have *your delight in them*, who, in the judgment of God, are *the excellent of the earth* (3), however they may be deſpiſed and derided by men.

6. I would alſo adviſe that you "endeavour to ſearch out thoſe, if there be any ſuch about or near you, who are much in your own circumſtances."

(1) Prov. xiii. 20. (2) Pſal. cxix. 63. (3) Pſal. xvi. 3.

Obſerve, eſpecially among young people, whether there are any that ſeem of late to have grown more ſerious than ordinary; and particularly more conſtant in attending the ordinances of God, and more cautious in venturing on occaſions and temptations to ſin; and if you can diſcover ſuch, endeavour to form an acquaintance with them. Try by proper hints how far their circumſtances reſemble yours; and as you find encouragement, enter into a ſtricter friendſhip with them, founded on religion, and intended to promote it in each other's hearts. Aſſociate yourſelves in little bands for Chriſtian converſe and prayer; and by this means you will quicken, and ſtrengthen the hearts of each other. For on the one hand, what they tell you of their own experience will much confirm you in a perſuaſion that what you find in yourſelves is not a mere fancy, but is really *a Divine work* begun on your hearts, and will give you encouragement to purſue it as ſuch; for *as face anſwers to face in water, ſo does the heart of man to man* (1): and on the other hand, the obſervation of your pious zeal will quicken others, and may occaſion the revival of religion in the hearts of elder Chriſtians; as, I bleſs God, I have found ſome things of this kind have done, and hope (and through the Divine bleſſing expect) to find it more and more. Therefore *exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, leſt any of you ſhould be hardened through the deceitfulneſs of ſin* (2). *Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees* (3); and be aſſured, that while you are endeavouring to help others, you will find in yourſelves the firſt fruits of this happy attempt; and while you *water others*, you *will be watered alſo yourſelves* (4).

7. It is an advice of the higheſt importance, that "whoever you are, you ſhould immediately fly to Chriſt, and repoſe the confidence of your ſouls upon him."

Obſerve that I urge you, WHOEVER YOU ARE, to fly immediately to Chriſt: and this I do, to guard againſt a ſtrange notion which ſome are ready to entertain, as if we were to bring ſomething of our own righteouſneſs

(1) Prov. xxvii. 19. (2) Heb. iii. 13. (3) Iſa. xxxv. 3.
(4) Prov. xi. 25.

and obedience to him, to render us worthy of being accepted by him. But this is a grand miſtake. The bleſſings of the goſpel are not to be conſidered as matter of bargain and ſale: no, if we *come to buy wine and milk*, it muſt be *without money and without price* (1); and *whoever will take of the water of life*, muſt do it *freely* (2). If he pretend to offer an equivalent, he forfeits his ſhare in the invitation; and muſt be made to know, that the price he offers is a great affront to the value of the bleſſings for which he would thus barter.——Let this then be your language, "Lord, I have undone myſelf, and in me is no help; I ſee nothing in myſelf which makes me worthy of thy regard; but this I know, that *where ſin has abounded, grace does much more abound, and reigns through righteouſneſs unto eternal life by Jeſus Chriſt* (3); *through whom* thou haſt aſſured me in thy word that *eternal life is the gift of God* (4). As ſuch let me receive it: and by how much the more undeſerving I have been, by ſo much the more will I celebrate the riches of thy grace in making me a veſſel of mercy, and a monument of love throughout all eternity.—Bleſſed Jeſus, thou haſt ſaid, that *him who comes unto thee thou wilt in no wiſe caſt out* (5): behold, I come, and caſt myſelf at thy feet; receive me, and *put me among the children* (6), though I deſerve not the very *crumbs that fall from thy table* (7)."

You will not, I hope, imagine that when I give ſuch advice as this, I mean to inſinuate that a perſon, purpoſing to continue in his ſins, may nevertheleſs come and receive the bleſſings of the Goſpel: for that would be no other than in the groſſeſt manner to pervert and contradict the whole tenor of it. But this I ſay, and repeat it, that when once a ſinner finds himſelf, by Divine grace, diſpoſed to turn from his ſins to God, and made willing to accept the mercy tendered in the Goſpel, of which a deliverance from ſin and a renovation of nature are a great, important, and eſſential part; he may with cheerfulneſs apply himſelf to the great Redeemer, as one of thoſe whom he came on purpoſe to deliver; and in proportion to the degree in which he can diſcern the ſin-

(1) Iſa. lv. 1. (2) Rev. xxii. 17. (3) Rom. v. 20, 21.
(4) Rom. vi. 23. (5) John vi. 37. (6) Jer. iii. 19.
(7) Mat. xv. 27.

cerity of his ſentiments, he may open his heart to comfort, how great ſoever his former unworthineſs has been, and how lately ſoever ſuch impreſſions may have been made upon his heart.

8. "Make the dedication of yourſelves to Chriſt and his ſervice as ſolemn a thing as you can."

We read in the Acts of ſome that *were baptized*, and publicly *received into the church* the very *ſame day* in which they *were converted* (1): and though a change of circumſtances may at preſent render it convenient to defer doing it for ſome time with the ſolemnity of the ordinance of the Lord's ſupper, which is peculiarly intended for that purpoſe; becauſe it is proper that the efficacy of your repentance and converſion ſhould firſt of all be ſo far ſeen, as in the judgment of charity to approve the ſincerity of it: yet I think, when you feel your hearts abſolutely determined for God, you ſhould in a ſolemn manner lay hold of his covenant, in ſecret at leaſt, as ſoon as poſſible; and declare, as before him that ſearcheth all hearts, the ſincerity of that acceptance.—Some have recommended the doing this in a written engagement; and there are ſeveral very affecting forms of this kind in books on this ſubject, which may very profitably be uſed. But I hope the fulneſs of your heart will dictate ſomething of this kind, if ſuch helps ſhould be wanting, or if any peculiar conſideration ſhould prevent their being uſed.—And ſurely, if you feel the love of the bleſſed Jeſus glowing in your hearts as you ought, you will need no other engagement to yield yourſelves to him: that love will be inſtead of ten thouſand arguments; and you will ſee a ſecret charm in the view of ſerving him, which will engage your very ſoul to ſpring forward with vigour and eagerneſs to every proper inſtance of it. The dread of future puniſhment has certainly its uſe to reſtrain from the commiſſion of ſin, eſpecially in an hour of preſſing temptation; and the hope of that *exceeding and eternal weight of glory*, which the goſpel promiſes, will have a greater efficacy upon a generous mind: yet I will venture to ſay, that a heart powerfully

(1) Acts ii. 41, 47.

impreſſed with the love of Jeſus will have a yet ſtronger influence than either of theſe. Cordial friendſhip needs not to be hired to perform its proper office. Love is a law to itſelf: it adds a delightful reliſh to every attempt for the ſervice of its object: and it is moſt evidently thus in the preſent caſe. "Lord," will the Chriſtian ſay, "wilt thou do me the honour to accept any feeble attempt for thy ſervice which I can form? I thank thee for it, and bow my head before thee in the moſt grateful acknowledgments, that thou favoureſt me with an ability to diſcharge, in any degree, the fulneſs of my grateful heart in preſenting them. O that my whole ſoul might daily riſe before thee as an acceptable ſacrifice in the flame of love! O that I might always feel *my heart enlarged, to run the way of thy commandments* (1)! Were the degree of my future happineſs from this moment invariably fixed, I would ſtill purſue this delightful buſineſs; for there is no other in which my ſoul could find a pleaſure equal or comparable to it." If you feel ſuch thoughts as theſe riſing in your mind, breathe them out before the throne from day to day; and when you have done it, recollect frequently *the vows of God* that are *upon you* (2); and ſee, that *having ſworn, you perform it* (3), and maintain in the whole of your lives a conduct agreeable to ſuch a profeſſion as this.

9. "Gird up the loins of your mind to encounter with a great deal of difficulty in your Chriſtian courſe."

Many are the difficulties that you muſt expect; great, and poſſibly for a while increaſing difficulties. It is commonly ſaid indeed, that thoſe difficulties which attend the entrance on a religious life are the greateſt; and in themſelves conſidered, no doubt but they are ſo: they ariſe from many quarters, and unite all together in the ſame deſign of keeping you from a believing application to Chriſt, and a reſolute cloſure with him. In this reſpect, evil ſometimes ariſes to a man *in his own houſe* (4); and thoſe, whoſe near relation ſhould rather engage them to give the young convert the beſt aſſiſtance, where his moſt important intereſts are concerned,

(1) Pſal. cxix. 32. (2) Pſal. lvi. 12. (3) Pſal. cxix. 106.
(4) Mat. x. 35, 36.

are on the contrary ready to lay a ſtumbling block in his way; and perhaps act as if they had rather he ſhould have no religion at all, than change a few circumſtances in the outward profeſſion of it. Worldly intereſt too is perhaps to be ſacrificed; and conſcience cannot be preſerved without giving up the friendſhip of thoſe whom at any other expenſe but conſcience a man would gladly oblige. And it is no wonder if Satan make his utmoſt efforts, and thoſe very unwearied too, that he may prevent the revolt of theſe ſubjects, or rather the eſcape of his priſoners. The Chriſtian is therefore called upon by the Apoſtle to arm himſelf as for a combat, and that at all points; to *put on the whole armour of God, that he may be able to withſtand in the evil day; and having done all, to ſtand* (1).

Nor muſt you, my friends, though as ſoon as you have *put on your harneſs* you gain ſome important victory, *boaſt* as if you might ſecurely *put it off* (2). Your whole life muſt be a ſeries of exerciſe. *Through much* oppoſition, as well as *much tribulation, you muſt enter into the kingdom of God* (3): and though your difficulties may generally be greateſt at firſt, yet your encouragements then may perhaps be ſo peculiarly great, and your ſpirits under their firſt religious impreſſions ſo warm, that other difficulties, in themſelves ſmaller, may preſs more ſenſibly upon you. Endeavour therefore to keep yourſelves in a prepared poſture: Put on a ſteady reſolution; and to ſupport it, *ſit down and count the coſt, leſt having begun to build*, you ſhamefully deſiſt and *be not able to finiſh it* (4); or *having put your hand to the plough*, you ſhould *look back*, and become *unfit for the kingdom of God* (5). And therefore,

10. "Let every ſtep in this attempt be taken with a deep ſenſe of your own weakneſs, and a humble dependence upon Divine grace to be communicated to you as the matter requires."

Recollect ſeriouſly what I was telling you in a former Diſcourſe, of the neceſſity of a Divine agency and inter-

(1) Epheſ. vi. 11, 13. (2) 1 Kings xx. 11. (3) Luke ix. 62.
(4) Luke xiv. 28, 30. (5) Luke ix. 62.

poſition; and remember, it depends upon God, not only to *begin the good work*, but alſo to carry it on, and *perform it until the day of Jeſus Chriſt* (1). If we *truſt in our own hearts*, eſpecially after this ſolemn admonition, this plain inſtruction, added to ſuch frequent experience, we *are fools* indeed (2). Let us therefore *truſt in the Lord, and not lean to our own underſtanding* (3). And do you, my friends, who have but juſt lifted yourſelves in this holy war, every one of you ſay, with an humble yet cheerful heart, *in the name of our God will we ſet up our banners* (4). And if thus you *wait on the Lord*, you *ſhall renew your ſtrength*; and even the *feebleſt ſoul* ſhall be enabled by *Divine grace* to *mount up with wing as eagles*, and to preſs on from one degree of religious improvement to another, while *the youths ſhall faint and be weary, and the young men ſhall utterly fall* (5). The Apoſtle expreſſes, in the livelieſt manner, his dependence on the Divine Redeemer to communicate this grace in a proper degree, when he ſays, *Let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need* (6): plainly implying, that it may be obtained if we have but hearts to ſeek for it; which, as on the one hand, it effectually takes off all idle excuſes for the neglect of our duty, pleaded from our own acknowledged weakneſs, any further than we are ſupported by the Divine power; ſo on the other hand it animates the heart, that, ſenſible of its various infirmities, deſires nevertheleſs to go forth to the work of God, and to conſecrate all its faculties to his ſervice; uſing them, ſuch as they are, for God, and humbly ſeeking from him the enlargement of them.

Go therefore, my friends, into the Divine preſence; and while under a ſenſe of this be not diſcouraged, though mountains of oppoſition may lie in your way. Thoſe *mountains ſhall be made low*, and ſpread themſelves into *a plain* before you (7); while you go forth under the influences of the Spirit of the Lord, who *is able to make all grace abound* to his people (8).——Of this Paul in our text was a moſt celebrated inſtance, who not only

(1) Phil. i. 6. (2) Prov. xxviii. 26. (3) Prov. iii. 5.
(4) Pſal. xx. 5. (5) Iſa. xl. 30, 31. (6) Heb. iv. 16.
(7) Iſa xl. 4. (8) 2 Cor. ix. 8.

received, as was here promiſed, *directions what he ſhould do*, but had ſtrength alſo given him to perform it; a *ſtrength*, which was *made perfect* and illuſtrious in his *weakneſs* (1): and when, in conſequence of this, he had attained to very diſtinguiſhed improvements in religion, and had been enabled to act up, in the moſt honourable manner, not only to the Chriſtian character in general, but to that of a miniſter and an Apoſtle, he acknowledges, in all his *abundant labours*, that it was not *he, but the grace of God that was with him* (2).

If it be thus with you, my brethren, you will be *eſtabliſhed and built up in your moſt holy faith* (3). The moſt agreeable hopes we form concerning you, when we ſee you under ſuch ſerious impreſſions as this Diſcourſe ſuppoſes, will be anſwered; and they *who have ſpoken to you the word of God*, on ſuch occaſions as theſe, will have the pleaſure to think that they *have not run in vain* (4).

And now if theſe directions, which I have offered to you with great plainneſs and freedom, but with the ſincereſt deſire of you edification and eſtabliſhment in religion, be ſeriouſly purſued, I ſhall have the ſatisfaction of thinking, that though I might find you in the number of the unregenerate when I began theſe lectures, I ſhall carry you on along with me through the only head that yet remains to be handled; and ſhall indeed addreſs myſelf to you, as thoſe who *were ſometimes darkneſs, but are now light in the Lord* (5), when I proceed to addreſs thoſe who have been renewed by Divine grace, which I promiſed as my laſt general, and with which I ſhall conclude my Diſcourſes on this important ſubject.

(1) 2 Cor. xii. 9. (2) 1 Cor. xv. 10. (3) Col. ii. 7. Jud. ver. 20.
(4) Phil. ii. 16. (5) Eph. v. 8.

SERMON X.

AN ADDRESS TO THE REGENERATE, FOUNDED ON THE PRECEDING DISCOURSES.

JAMES i. 18.

Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we ſhould be a kind of firſt fruits of his creatures.

I INTEND the words, which I have now been reading, only as an introduction to that *addreſs to the ſons and daughters of the Lord Almighty*, with which I am now to conclude theſe Lectures; and therefore ſhall not enter into any critical diſcuſſion, either of them, or of the context. I hope God has made the ſeries of theſe diſcourſes, in ſome meaſure, uſeful to thoſe for whoſe ſervice they were immediately intended: but if they have not been ſo to all, and if with relation to many I have *laboured in vain* from Sabbath to Sabbath, I cannot be ſurpriſed at it. *What am I better than my fathers* (1)? It has, in every age, been their complaint, that they *have ſtretched out their hands all the day to a diſobedient and gainſaying people* (2); that *the bellows* have been *burnt*, and *the lead conſumed of the fire*, but the droſs has *not been taken away*: ſuch *reprobate ſilver* have multitudes been found (3). Yea, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt himſelf, who ſpake with ſuch unequalled eloquence, with ſuch divine energy, yet met with multitudes, who were *like the deaf adder*, that *would not*

(1) 1 Kings xix. 4. (2) Iſa. lxv. 2. Rom. x. 21. (3) Jer. vi. 29, 30.

hearken to the voice of the wiſeſt charmer (1); and ſurely *the diſciple is not above his maſter, nor the ſervant above his lord* (2).

When indeed we conſider the infinite importance of the meſſage we addreſs to you, Oh ye periſhing ſinners! we hardly know how to give over, or to take a denial. We feel a ſtrong impulſe on our hearts to give *line upon line*, and *precept upon precept* (3): as a phyſician that loves his patient, when he ſees the diſtemper prevailing, and has run through the whole range of medicines, is ready, while life yet remains, not entirely to give over, but to repeat again what he had preſcribed unſucceſsfully before. And if God ſpares our lives, no doubt many of thoſe things which I have before been urging, muſt in ſubſtance be repeated. But at preſent I will deſiſt: I know not what more or further to ſay; and if you are utterly unimpreſſed with what I have already laid before you, eſpecially with regard to the character of the unregenerate—the nature of regeneration—the abſolute neceſſity of it—and of the Divine agency in producing it;—I know not what further to urge, and muſt leave you either to the grace or the judgment of God. The time will certainly come, when you will ſee and own the importance of theſe things. The word of God will, in one ſenſe or another, take hold of every ſoul that hears it, and, perhaps on ſome of you in a very terrible manner, and in a very little time. But if it do, I may ſay with the apoſtle Paul, when in token of the ſolemnity with which he ſpoke, *he ſhook his raiment*, and took leave of his obſtinate hearers, *I am clean from your blood* (4); and ſince you refuſe to be inſtructed, I turn to thoſe who regard what I ſay. And thus, according to the method I at firſt propoſed, I proceed,

Seventhly, To conclude theſe Diſcourſes with an addreſs to thoſe, who, by Divine Grace, are experimentally acquainted with this great work of regeneration; to ſhew them how they ought to be affected with the conſideration of the truths that have been offered, and, what improvement they ſhould make of ſuch a courſe of Sermons as you have lately been attending.

(1) Pſalm lviii. 4, 5. (2) Mat. x. 24. (3) Iſa. xxviii. 10.
(4) Acts xviii. 6.

Out of a general regard to the glory of God and the good of ſouls, you have attended on what has hitherto been ſpoken to perſons of a very different character; and I hope not altogether without ſome ſenſible refreſhment and advantage; but now hear more immediately for yourſelves, and *ſuffer a word of exhortation* in ſuch particulars as theſe: Be thankful to God for what you have experienced; improve it as an engagement to behave in a ſuitable manner; ſtudy to promote the work of God upon the hearts of others;—and long for that bleſſed world where the change that is now begun, and is gradually advancing in your ſouls, ſhall be univerſal and complete. Your own wiſdom and piety have, no doubt, prevented me in each of theſe particulars; but you will be glad to enter more fully into the reflection than you could do, while it was intermingling itſelf with other thoughts.

[1.] "Return the moſt affectionate acknowledgments of praiſe to the God of all mercy for the experience you have had of a regenerating change."

I would now addreſs this exhortation and charge to every one of you, who, through Divine grace, hope you can ſay, that you are *born again;* to all who can ſay, that God *has, of his own will, begotten you with the word of truth, that you may be a kind of firſt fruits of his creatures.* To you I would ſay, *Sing unto the Lord, O ye ſaints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holineſs* and goodneſs (1). *Give thanks to the Father, who has made you meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the ſaints in light* (2). Join your voices and your hearts in the moſt cheerful hymns of praiſe, whatever your different circumſtances are. Let the young and the old, the rich and the poor, the honourable and the mean, rejoice together; if any may be called poor, who are thus enriched; if any may be accounted mean, who are thus honoured. *Bleſs the Lord at all times,* let *his praiſe be continually in your mouths* (3); and endeavour to carry along with you, through the darkeſt road you travel, and the bittereſt ſorrows you taſte, cheerfulneſs in your hearts, and praiſe

(1) Pſal. xxx. 4. (2) Col. i. 12. (3) Pſal. xxxiv. 1.

on your tongues; conſidering—how important the bleſſing is with which the Lord has favoured you;—how few there are who partake of it;—and in the midſt of how much oppoſition the Divine grace has taken hold of your ſouls, and wrought its wonders of love there.

1. Conſider, my Chriſtian friends, "how important this favour is which God has beſtowed upon you," in thus *begetting you as a kind of firſt-fruits of his creatures.*

Juſtly indeed may I ſay, *Behold what manner of love the Father hath beſtowed upon us*, that *we ſhould* be regenerated by his grace, and ſo *be called*, and that with propriety, *the ſons of God* (1)! Juſtly may I ſay to you, now you are aſſembled in the *courts of the Lord*, in thoſe emphatical words of David, *Oh come, let us worſhip, and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker* (2): for *it is he that has made us and not we ourſelves*, with regard to this ſecond, as well as the firſt creation; and *we*, in conſequence of it, *are* in the nobleſt ſenſe *his people, and the ſheep of his paſture: enter*, therefore, *into his gates with thankſgiving, and into his courts with praiſe; be thankful unto him, and bleſs his name* (3).

My brethren, it is a favour in which the ſalvation of your ſouls is concerned; and can that be ſmall? or ought it ever to be thought of but with the higheſt emotion and enlargedneſs of heart? The gracious purpoſes of God towards his children are to make every one of them *higher than the kings of the earth* (4), to give them more ſolid ſatisfaction than crowns and kingdoms can afford, and at length to raiſe them to a diadem of immortal glory. Oh what reaſon have you with the Apoſtle, to ſay, *Bleſſed be the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who, according to his abundant mercy, has begotten us again to a lively hope, by the reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt from the dead*, even *to* the hope of *an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reſerved in heaven for us, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto ſalvation* (5)! Survey this great privilege which God has already given you, this high ſecurity, theſe glorious hopes. Has

(1) 1 John iii. 1. (2) Pſal. xcv. 6. (3) Pſal. c. 3, 4.
(4) Pſal. lxxxix. 27. (5) 1 Pet. i. 3—5.

he not brought the beginning of glory already into your ſouls? has he not wrought you to a filial temper, and taught you to cry, *Abba Father* (1)? Has he not, in ſome meaſure, formed and faſhioned your minds to a meetneſs to dwell with angels and perfected ſpirits in heaven? So that you can now ſay, even with relation to that which you already feel, that *you are no more ſtrangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the ſaints, and of the houſehold of God* (2). You are even *now the ſons of God, and it doth not yet appear what you ſhall be* (3); but there is enough appears, and enough known at preſent, of what you ſhall be, and of what you are, to revive, to delight, to tranſport the heart.

And is not this too, O thou afflicted ſoul, who art called to encounter with the moſt painful difficulties, enough to be the means of thy ſupport, and to afford thee matter for thy ſtrong conſolation? You that are *toſſed with tempeſts* (4), and obliged to ſtruggle under various and long continued burthens, have you not here a joy that the world can neither beſtow nor impair, a pleaſure in public and in ſecret duties, and *a hope*, which is *as the anchor of the ſoul both ſure and ſtedfaſt, entering into that within the veil* (5), and ſo enabling you to outride theſe ſtorms and tempeſts? How glorious does your lot appear when viewed in the light of Scripture! You are expreſsly told, *All things are yours* (6): *the Lord will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from* you (7): *all the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth to* you (8); and ere long you ſhall ſee how they are ſo. You have a ſight by faith of the inheritance appointed for his children; but he does not intend merely a diſtant proſpect for you: *you ſhall go in and poſſeſs that good land* (9), and ſhall ere long *be abſent from the body, and preſent with the Lord* (10): yea, *the Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, ere long, *ſhall come to be glorified in his ſaints, and to be admired in all them that believe* (11), to be glorified and admired, in and by you in particular; when bearing the image of your heavenly Father, you ſhall riſe far beyond this earth and all its vain anxieties,

(1) Gal. iv. 6. (2) Eph. ii. 19. (3) 1 John iii. 2.
(4) Iſa. liv. 11. (5) Heb. vi. 19. (6) 1 Cor. iii. 21.
(7) Pſal. lxxxiv. 11. (8) Pſal. xxv. 10. (9) Deut. iv. 22.
(10) 2 Cor. v. 8. (11) 2 Theſſ. i. 10.

and vainer amuſements, to dwell forever in his preſence. And what is there in this world that you imagine you want, which is by any means to be compared with theſe enjoyments and hopes? Surely, Sirs, in ſuch a view, you ſhould be much more than content; and ſhould feel your inward admiration, love, and joy, burſting the bonds of ſilence, and tuning your voices, that have been broken by ſighs, into the moſt cheerful and exalted anthems of praiſe: eſpecially when you conſider,

2. "How few there are that partake of this important favour, which God has extended to you."

I hope I need not, after all I have ſaid, remind you at large, that I intend not by any means to ſpeak, as excluding thoſe of different forms and different experiences; as if, in conſequence of that diverſity, they had *neither part nor lot in this matter* (1). I hope that many who are not ſo ready, as it were to be wiſhed, to *receive one another*, are nevertheleſs, in this reſpect, *received by Chriſt to the glory of God* (2). Yet the temper and conduct of the generality of mankind, even under a Chriſtian profeſſion, too plainly ſhew, that they have the marks of eternal ruin upon them: and one can form no hope concerning them, conſiſtent with the tenor of the whole word of God, any other than this, that poſſibly they may hereafter be changed into ſomething contrary to what they are, and in that change be happy.

Now that you are not left among the wide extended ruins of mankind, but are ſet as pillars in the building of God, is what you have been taught by the preceding Diſcourſes to refer to the grace of God, which has taken and poliſhed you to the form you now bear: or, as the Evangeliſt expreſſes it, in language more ſuitable to the ſubject before us, *the power*, or privilege, *to become the ſons of God*, is what *he gives to as many as receive him*; and it is manifeſt as to your regeneration, that *you are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the fleſh, nor of the will of man, but of God* (3): for *we love him, becauſe he firſt loved us* (4); and whatſoever our attainments be, there is no true he-

(1) Acts viii. 21. (2) Rom. xv. 7. (3) John i. 12, 13.
(4) 1 John iv. 19.

liever but will be ready, with the Apoſtle Paul, to ſay, *By the grace of God, I am what I am* (1).

And now, when theſe two thoughts are taken in this compariſon with each other, how deeply ſhould they impreſs our minds! and how ſhould it excite us to the moſt lively gratitude, to conſider that when ſo many of our fellow-creatures periſh, even under the ſound of the Goſpel; that when they live and die under the power of a corrupt and degenerate nature, deſpiſing all the means which God has given them of becoming better, and turning them into the occaſion of greater miſchief; God ſhould graciouſly incline our hearts to a wiſer and better choice! It is indeed a melancholy reflection, that the number of thoſe who are made wiſe to ſalvation ſhould be ſo ſmall; yet it is an endearing circumſtance in the Divine goodneſs to us, that when it is ſo ſmall, we ſhould be included in it: as no doubt it would appear to every truly religious perſon in the ark, that when but *eight ſouls were ſaved* from the deluge, he ſhould be one.—*There is now a remnant*, ſays the Apoſtle, *according to the election of grace* (2): to that grace therefore ſhould we render the praiſe. We have indeed choſen him; but it is in conſequence of *his chooſing us* (3). We have ſaid, *The Lord is my portion*; but let us remember to *bleſs him* that *he has given us* that *counſel* (4), in conſequence of which we have been inclined to do it. Again,

3. Conſider, "in the midſt of how much oppoſition the grace of God has laid hold on your ſouls, and wrought its wonders of love there."

Chriſtians, look into your own hearts; yea, look back upon your own lives, and ſee whether many of you have not reaſon to ſay, with the great Apoſtle, *It is a faithful ſaying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Chriſt Jeſus came into the world, to ſave ſinners, of whom I am chief* (5): and yet *to me, who am leſs than the leaſt of all ſaints, is this grace given* (6), that I ſhould be a regenerate, adopted child of God, begotten to an inheritance of eternal glory.

"Oh," may one Chriſtian ſay, "how obſtinately did I ſtrive againſt my own happineſs! like a poor creature

(1) 1 Cor. xv. 10. (2) Rom. xi. 5. (3) John xv. 16.
(4) Pſal. xvi. 5, 7. (5) 1 Tim. i. 15. (6) Eph. iii. 8.

that, having received some dangerous wound, and being delirious with a fever attending it, struggles with the hand that is stretched out to heal him. How did I draw back from the yoke of God! How did I trifle with convictions, and put them off from one time to another! So that God might most righteously have awakened any heart rather than mine. He admonished me by his word, and by his providence; he sent afflictions; he wrought out deliverances for me; and yet I went on to harden my heart, as if I had been afflicted and delivered, that I might work greater *abominations* (1); till *the Lord being merciful to me, laid hold upon me, and drew me out of Sodom* (2)."

And here another Christian will be ready to say within himself, "If the grace of God wrought sooner upon me, when my soul was more pliant, when my heart was comparatively tender in infancy or childhood, or in early youth; yet what ungrateful returns have I since made for his mercy! How defective have I been in those fruits of holiness which might reasonably have been expected from me, who have so long a time been *planted in the house of the Lord!* Alas for me! that I have *flourished* no more *in the courts of my God* (3). How often have I forgotten and forsaken him, how cold and negligent has my spirit been, how inconstant my walk, how indolent my behaviour, for these many years that have passed since I was first brought into his family! How little have I done in his service in proportion to the advantages I have enjoyed! All this he foresaw; all the instances in which my *goodness* would be *as a morning cloud, and as the early dew* (4); all the instances in which this perverse heart of mine, so prone to backslide, should *turn aside*, and start back from him *like a deceitful bow* (5): and yet he has mercy upon me, I know not why: I cannot pretend to account for it any otherwise than by saying, *Even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight* (6): *thou hast mercy on whom thou wilt have mercy, and thou hast compassion on whom thou wilt have compassion* (7). I have revolted deeply from thee again and again; yet thou sufferest me not to be lost to this very day, nor wilt thou ever

(1) Jer. vii. 10. (2) Gen. xix. 16. (3) Psal. xcii. 13.
(4) Hos. vi. 4. (5) Psal. lxxviii. 57. (6) Mat. xi. 26.
(7) Rom. ix. 15.

ſuffer it: *Thou reſtoreſt my ſoul; thou leadeſt me in the paths of righteouſneſs for thy name's ſake* (1). *Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue to this day* (2); and *ſurely goodneſs and mercy ſhall follow me all the days of my life;* and unworthy as I am ſo much as to enter into thine houſe below, *I ſhall dwell in the houſe of the Lord forever* above (3). Thus, Lord, thou makeſt me, as it were, a wonder to myſelf; and I hope to expreſs my admiration and my gratitude throughout eternal ages: and if I can vie with the reſt of thy redeemed ones in nothing elſe, I will at leaſt do it in bowing low before thy throne, and acknowledging that I am of the number of the moſt unworthy, in whom my Lord has been pleaſed to glorify the riches of his mercy, and the freedom of his grace."

In the mean time, Chriſtians, I call you often to entertain yourſelves with ſuch views as theſe, often to excite your hearts by ſuch lively conſiderations: I call you, in the name of your Father and your Saviour, to a whole life of gratitude and praiſe. And this leads me to add,

[2.] "Improve thoſe experiences you have had of Divine grace, as an engagement to behave in a ſuitable manner."

Remember the lively admonition of the text, that you were *begotten by him* for this very purpoſe, *that you ſhould be a kind of firſt-fruits of his creatures.* See, therefore, that you be entirely conſecrated to him; and behave as becomes the *children of God, in the midſt of a crooked and perverſe generation:* being not only *harmleſs and blameleſs* among them, but *ſhining as lights in the world, and holding forth* that *word of life* (4), by which he has begotten you to himſelf, *and quickened you when you were dead in treſpaſſes and ſins* (5). God has now brought you into a moſt honourable relation: he may therefore well expect more, much more from you than from others. He has *made you prieſts to himſelf* (6), and you are therefore to *offer up ſpiritual ſacrifices acceptable to God by Jeſus Chriſt* (7). *You were once darkneſs, but now are ye light in the Lord; walk* therefore *as children of light* (8). Remember *you are not*

(1) Pſal. xxiii. 3. (2) Acts xxvi. 22. (3) Pſal. xxiii. 6.
(4) Phil. ii. 15, 16. (5) Eph. ii. 1, 5. (6) Rev. i. 6.
(7) 1 Pet. ii. 5. (8) Eph. v. 8.

your own (1); your time, your poſſeſſions, and all your capacities for ſervice, are the property of your heavenly Father. And permit me to remind you, that if you deſire to ſee this doctrine of regeneration prevail, you, who pretend to be experimentally acquainted with it, muſt take great care that your behaviour may not only be innocent, but exemplary: otherwiſe many will be ready to *blaſpheme the holy name* of that *God* (2), whom you call your Father; and you are like to bring a reproach upon *the houſehold of faith*, which probably you will never be able to roll away.

Chriſtians, the dignity of our birth and our hopes is too little conſidered and regarded; and the reaſon why the world thinks ſo meanly of it, is becauſe we ourſelves are ſo inſenſible of its excellency. Did we apprehend it more, we ſhould ſurely be more ſolicitous to *walk worthy of* that *calling wherewith we are called* (3), that high and holy calling. Let me therefore exhort you to endeavour to looſen your affections more from theſe entanglements of time and ſenſe, which ſo much debaſe our minds, and diſhonour our lives. *Yield yourſelves unto God as thoſe that are alive from the dead* (4): employ, with a growing zeal, to the honour of God, that renewed life which he has given you: *Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds* (5): and let your converſation and behaviour be like thoſe who *feel* the *conſtraining influences* of *Divine love* (6); who are, not in form, but in reality, devoted to God; and who would be continually *waiting for his ſalvation* (7), with that temper in which you could moſt deſire that ſalvation to find you when it comes.

[3.] Let thoſe who have experienced the power of Divine grace themſelves, "ſtudy to promote the work of God upon the hearts of others."

Labour, as much as poſſible, to ſpread this temper which God has wrought in your hearts; for you cannot but know that with it you ſpread true happineſs,

(1) 1 Cor. vi. 19. (2) 2 Sam. xii. 14. (3) Eph. iv. 1.
(4) Rom. vi. 13. (5) Rom. xii. 2. (6) 2 Cor. v. 14.
(7) Gen. xlix. 18.

which alone is to be found in that intercourſe with the great Author of our being, for which this lays a foundation, and in the regular exerciſe of thoſe powers which are thus ſanctified. No ſooner was Paul converted himſelf, but he preſently ſet himſelf to bring others to Chriſt, and to *preach the faith which once he deſtroyed* (1). And David ſpeaks of it as the effect of God's pardoning love to him, *Then will I teach tranſgreſſors thy ways, and ſinners ſhall be converted unto thee* (2).

If, therefore, God has called us to the office of the miniſtry, as the experience of this change on our own hearts will be our beſt qualification for our public work (and indeed ſuch a qualification that nothing elſe can ſupply the want of it); ſo it will ſurely excite us in a very powerful manner to apply vigorouſly to this care. *That which we have* not only *heard*, but *ſeen with our eyes, and looked upon, and handled of the word of life*, let us *declare to others; that their fellowſhip alſo may be with the Father, and with his Son Jeſus Chriſt* (3). Let us declare it in our public diſcourſes, and never be aſhamed to bear our teſtimony to that grace to which we are ſo much indebted; to *that grace by which we are what we are* (4). Let us *warn every man, and teach every man* the abſolute neceſſity of regeneration; and expoſe the vanity of all thoſe hopes which are built upon any fair outſide, on any moral decency of behaviour, or any humane turn of temper, on any warm flight of imagination or emotion of paſſions, while the ſoul continues unrenewed and unſanctified. Let us endeavour to *ſave men with fear, pulling them out of the fire* (5), which, if they are yet unregenerate, is juſt ready to kindle upon them. And let us be often reviewing our reſpective flocks, that we may ſee who they are, concerning whom there is reaſon to entertain this fear; that proper applications may be made to them in private, as well as in public; that joining our admonitions to our ſermons, and our prayers and examples to both, we may at leaſt *deliver our own ſouls* (6), if we cannot deliver theirs. But in proportion to the degree that ſuch a ſpirit prevails

(1) Gal. i. 13. (2) Pſal. li. 13. (3) 1 John i. 1, 3.
(4) 1 Cor. xv. 10. (5) Jude ver. 23. (6) Ezek. xxxiii. 9.

in us, there is very great encouragement to hope it will be propagated to them, and that *our labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord* (1).

And let me beſeech you, my beloved hearers in other ſtations of life, that you would not imagine the work is ſo entirely ours that you have nothing to do with it. Are we alone redeemed by the blood of the Son of God? Are we alone renewed and ſanctified by his grace? Are we alone the brethren and friends of mankind, that the generous care and endeavour to promote their eternal happineſs ſhould be entirely devolved upon us? We wiſh ſo well to the world, and permit us to ſay, we wiſh ſo well to you, to your own religious conſolation and eſtabliſhment, to your comfortable account, to your eternal reward, that we cannot but earneſtly exhort you all, even as many as *have taſted that the Lord is gracious* (2), that in this reſpect you join, not only as I truſt you do, your prayers with ours, but that you alſo join your endeavours.

Let me particularly addreſs this exhortation to thoſe of you who bear any diſtinguiſhed office in the ſociety, to whom therefore its religious intereſts are dear by additional ties. Let me addreſs to thoſe of you whoſe age and experience, in the human and the divine life, give you ſomething of a natural authority in your application, and command a diſtinguiſhed regard. Look round about you and obſerve the ſtate of religion in your neighbourhood; and labour to the utmoſt to propagate not ſo much this or that particular opinion or form of worſhip, but real vital Chriſtianity in the world. Bear your teſtimony to it on all proper occaſions: be not aſhamed of it in you familiar diſcourſe: and above all, labour to adorn it by your actions. And when you ſee any under ſerious impreſſions, as it is certain they will have a great deal diſcouraging and difficult to break through; and as the devil and his inſtruments, among whom I muſt neceſſarily reckon licentious company, will be doing their utmoſt to draw them back into *the ſnare of the fowler*; let me exhort and charge you to be as ſolicitous to ſave as others are to deſtroy. I know how many excuſes our

(1) 1 Cor. xv. 58. (2) 1 Pet. ii. 3.

cowardly and indolent hearts are ready to find out upon such an occasion: but I think those words of Solomon are a sufficient answer to all, and I beg you would seriously revolve them; *If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain: if thou sayest, Behold we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul,* (thine, Oh Christian, with such peculiar and gracious care) *doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works* (1)? He will assuredly remember, and will abundantly reward, every *work of faith, and* every *labour of love* (2); and we are insensible of our own true interest, if we do not see how much it is concerned here.

Let me especially leave this exhortation with you who are parents and heads of families. And one would imagine there should need but little importunity in such a case as this: one would think your own hearts should speak to you, upon such an occasion, in very pathetic language. Look upon your dear children, to whom you have conveyed a nature which you know to be degenerate and corrupt; and be earnest in your prayers before God, and your endeavours with them, that it may be renewed. And take care that you do not in this sense *despise* the soul *of your man-servant, or of your maid-servant* (3). God has brought them under your care, it may be in those years of life in which on the one hand, they are most capable of being instructed and seriously impressed; and in which, on the other hand, they are also most in danger of being corrupted. Perhaps their relation to you, and abode with you, is the most advantageous circumstance which may occur in their whole lives: see therefore that you seize it with a holy eagerness; and amidst all the charges you give them relating to your own business, neglect not that of *the one thing needful* (4); and labour heartily to bring them to the honour and happiness which is common to all God's servants, and peculiar to them alone.

Let me conclude this part of my address with entreating you all to express your concern for the souls of others, by your importunate prayers to God for them. Pray

(1) Prov. xxiv. 11, 12. (2) 1 Thess. i. 3. Heb. vi. 10.
(3) Job xxxi. 13. (4) Luke x. 42.

for the ſucceſs of goſpel ordinances; and for a bleſſing on the labours of all God's faithful ſervants throughout our whole land, of one or another denomination in religion. Yea, pray that thoughout the whole world, God would *revive his work in the midſt of the years* (1); that the religion of his Son, by which ſo many ſouls have been regenerated, refined, and ſaved, may be univerſally propagated; and that all who are vigorouſly engaged in ſo important, though ſo ſelf-denying a work, may find that *the hand of the Lord is with them*, and ſo *multitudes believe and turn unto the Lord* (2); ſo that *his ſons may be brought from far, and his daughters from the ends of the earth* (3); that *the barren may rejoice, and ſhe that did not travail with child, may break forth into ſinging, and cry aloud*; that *the children of* nations now *ſtrangers to Chriſt, may be more than of thoſe* that are already *eſpouſed to him* (4). And then,

[4.] Let all that are born again, "long for that bleſſed world, where the work of God ſhall be completed, and we ſhall appear with a dignity and glory becoming his children."

As for *God, his work is perfect* (5); and the time, the happy time is approaching, when we ſhall know, and the whole world ſhall know, in another manner than we now do, what our heavenly Father has intended for us in begetting us to himſelf.—Whatever our attainments here may be, *we know* at preſent but *in part* (6): and with whatever integrity of ſoul we now walk before God, we are ſanctified but in part: and hereupon we find, and muſt expect to find, *the fleſh ſtriving againſt the ſpirit*, as well as *the ſpirit againſt the fleſh*; *ſo that*, in many reſpects, *we cannot do the things that we would* (7): and in proportion to the degree in which our nature is refined and brightened, we are more ſenſible of the evil of theſe corruptions that remain within us; ſo that though we are not, in a ſtrict propriety of ſpeech, *carnal and ſold under ſin*, but do *indeed delight in the law of God after the inward man* (8), yet in the humility of our hearts we are often borrowing

(1) Hab. iii. 2. (2) Acts xi. 21. (3) Iſa. xliii. 6.
(4) Iſa. liv. 1. Gal. iv. 27. (5) Deut. xxxii. 4.
(6) 1 Cor. xiii. 9. (7) Gal. v. 17. (8) Rom. vii. 14, 22.

that pathetic complaint, *Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death* (1)! But let it be remembered, Chriſtians, as the matter of your joy, that the ſtruggle ſhall not be perpetual, that it ſhall not indeed be long. *Look up* with pleaſure then, *and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh* (2): the time is approaching, *when that which is perfect ſhall come*, and *that which is in part ſhall be done away* (3). You are *now the children of GOD*; but *it does not appear* to every eye that you are ſo: *the world knows us not* (4), nor are we to wonder at it; for even *Chriſt our Lord* was once *unknown*, and appeared in ſo much meanneſs, and ſo much calamity, that an undiſcerning and carnal eye could not have diſcovered who and what he was. But there is a day appointed for *the manifeſtation of the ſons of GOD* (5), as the Apoſtle Paul moſt happily expreſſes it; when he will manifeſt them to each other, and manifeſt them alſo to the whole world. They ſhall not always live thus at a diſtance from their Father's houſe, and under thoſe diſpenſations of Providence that look ſo much like diſregard and neglect: but he will take them home, and gather them to himſelf. Ere long, Chriſtians, he will call theſe heaven-born ſpirits of yours, that are now aſpiring towards him, to dwell in his immediate preſence: he will *receive you to himſelf*; and you ſhall ſtand where no ſinner ſhall have a place *in the congregation of the righteous* (6), and ſhall have *an inheritance among the ſaints in light*, the ſaints in holineſs and glory.—Oh happy day! when dropping this body in the grave, we ſhall aſcend pure and joyful ſpirits to that triumphant aſſembly, where there is not one vitiated affection, not one fooliſh thought to be found among the thouſands and ten thouſands of God's Iſrael! Oh bleſſed period of a regenerate ſtate! Though all the ſchemes of the Divine love were to reſt here, and theſe bodies were forever to be laid aſide, and utterly to be loſt in the grave; the rejoicing ſoul might ſay, "Lord, it is enough!" And it might be indeed enough for us; but it is not enough to anſwer the gracious purpoſes of God's paternal love.

(1) Rom. vii. 24. (2) Luke xxi. 28. (3) 1 Cor. xiii. 10.
(4) 1 John iii. 1, 2. (5) Rom. viii. 19. (6) Pſal. i. 5.

God will shew, in the most conspicuous manner, what a family he has raised to himself among the children of men; and therefore he will assemble them all in their complete persons, and will do it with solemn pomp and magnificent parade. He will for this purpose send *his own Son, with all his holy angels* (1), and will cause the bodies of millions of his children, that have long dwelt in the dust, to spring out of it, at once in forms of beauty and lustre, worthy their relation to him. This therefore is, with beautiful propriety, called by the Apostle *the adoption, even the redemption of our body* (2); alluding to the public ceremony, with which adoptions among the ancients were solemnly confirmed and declared, after they had been more privately transacted between the parties immediately concerned.

Oh, Christians, how reasonable is it that our souls should be rising with a secret ardour towards this blessed hope, this glorious abode!—It is pleasant for the children of God to meet and converse with one another upon earth; so pleasant, that I wonder they do not more frequently form themselves into little societies, in which, under that character, they should join their discourses and their prayers.—It is delightful to address to those that, we trust, through grace are born of God. No discourses are more pleasant than those that suit them: and could we, that are the ministers of Christ, reasonably hope, that we had none but such to attend our labours, we should joyfully confine our discourses to such subjects.—Yet while we are here, we see imperfections in others, we feel them yet more painfully in ourselves: and as there is no pure, unmixed society, no fellowship on earth that is completely holy and without blemish, so there is now no pure delight, no perfect pleasure to be met with here.—Oh when shall I depart from this mixed society, and reach that state where all is good, all glorious! where I shall see my heavenly Father, and all my brethren in the Lord; and shall behold them all forever acting up to their character! All *giving thanks to the Father, who has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light* (3)! All forever blessing and serving the great

(1) Mat. xxv. 31. (2) Rom. viii. 23. (3) Col. i. 12.

Redeemer; and without one ungenerous action, one reflecting word, one ſuſpicious thought, forever ſerving each other in love, rejoicing in each other's happineſs, and with the moſt prudent and ſtedfaſt application forever ſtudying and labouring to improve it!

With the moſt earneſt deſire that you, my dear brethren and friends, may at length attain to this ſtate of perfection and glory; and with a cheerful expectation, through Divine grace, that I ſhall ere long meet many of you in it, I cloſe this Sermon, and theſe Diſcourſes: not without a humble hope, that, when we arrive at this bleſſed world, theſe hours, which we have ſpent together in the houſe of God, in attending them, will come into a pleaſant remembrance; and that the God of all grace, to whoſe glory they are faithfully devoted, and to whoſe bleſſing they are humbly committed, will honour them as the means of increaſing his family, as well as of feeding and quickening thoſe who are already his regenerate children!

AMEN.

THE

SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE

OF

SALVATION

BY

GRACE THROUGH FAITH.

ILLUSTRATED AND IMPROVED IN

TWO SERMONS.

BY P. DODDRIDGE, D. D.

BOSTON:

PRINTED BY E. LINCOLN, WATER-STREET.

MAY, 1803.

TO THE

CHURCH AND CONGREGATION

OF

PROTESTANT DISSENTERS

AT

ROWELL;

To whom the Subſtance of theſe SERMONS was preached, and at whoſe deſire they are publiſhed.

My dear Brethren and Friends,
beloved in our common Lord,

WHEN I firſt preached theſe plain ſermons to my own congregation, which I here offer to your peruſal, I was much ſurpriſed at the requeſt which ſeveral of them made, that they might be printed: but I was yet more ſurpriſed, when after having delivered the ſubſtance of them in one diſcourſe at Rowell ſome time after, you ſo unanimouſly and affectionately made that requeſt your own. I apprehend, that though the many excellent treatiſes we have on this ſubject already, might excuſe my backwardneſs to comply with the firſt motion of this kind; yet abſolutely to have refuſed your repeated ſolicitation, might have appeared diſreſpectful to my good friends, and perhaps have looked like ſome unwillingneſs to bear my teſtimony to this great and important doctrine, in an age in which the credit of many evangelical truths ſeems to be fallen very low.

I am really ſorry I have delayed this little ſervice ſo long; but it was chiefly owing to my deſire of finiſhing my ſermons on REGENERATION, which indeed coſt me more labour than I at firſt apprehended. That ſeemed a buſineſs of ſuch importance, that I knew not how to interrupt it: but as they are now almoſt printed off, I ſend out theſe diſcourſes as a kind of ſupplement to them; and therefore they are printed in a form very fit to bind up with them. The delay is more excuſable, as SALVATION BY GRACE is not a ſubject which grows out of date in a few months. This glorious doctrine has been the joy of the church in all ages on earth; and it will be the ſong of all that have received it in truth throughout the ages of eternity, and be purſued in the heavenly regions with ever growing admiration and delight.

I cannot conclude this ſhort addreſs without congratulating you on the abundant goodneſs of God to you as a church, in bringing among you that worthy and excellent perſon*, under whoſe paſtoral care you are now ſo happily placed. I know he is a faithful witneſs to the truths of the goſpel, and rejoice in that rich abundance of gifts and graces, which render him ſo fit to ſtate and improve them in the moſt advantageous, as well as moſt agreeable and delightful manner. I hope and believe, that the grace he ſo humbly owns his dependence upon, will add happy ſucceſs to his labours: and I heartily pray that you and neighbouring churches may long be happy in him; and that God, who has, by ſuch various and gracious interpoſitions in your favour, expreſſed his paternal care of you, may ſtill delight to dwell among you. May he multiply you with men like a flock, daily adding to his Church among you ſuch as ſhall be ſaved! May your ſouls continually rejoice in his ſalvation! And may you ever walk worthy of the Lord, and prove, by the integrity and purity, the ſpirituality and uſefulneſs of your whole behaviour, that this grace of God which brings ſalvation has entered with power into your hearts; and that it is your care and delight to improve it, as well as to hear of it! To contribute to this bleſſed end, by this or any other attempt of cordial love and faithful reſpect, will be an unſpeakable pleaſure to,

My dear friends,

Your very affectionate ſervant,

in the bonds of our common Lord,

Northampton, Sept. 1. 1741.

P. DODDRIDGE.

* The Rev. Mr. *Jonathan Saunderſon.*

SALVATION BY GRACE.

SERMON I.

EPHES. II. 8.

For by grace ye are ſaved through faith; and that not of yourſelves; it is the gift of God.

YOU are often, my dear brethren and friends, hearing of the duties of a religious life; and it cannot but be a pleaſure to every faithful miniſter of Chriſt to obſerve, how willing, nay, how glad you are to hear of them; and with reſpect to many of you, how ready you are to practiſe them. But I am now coming to you with a renewed admonition on another head, which is always to be taken in connexion with the former; and which, I perſuade myſelf, will in that view be welcome to you all. I am to inculcate it upon you, that when you have done your utmoſt, how much ſoever that be, you ſhould ſtill ſay, that *you are unprofitable ſervants* (1); and endeavour to maintain a deep ſenſe of it upon your hearts, that, as the Apoſtle admoniſhes the believing Epheſians in the words of the text, *By grace ye are ſaved through faith; and that not of yourſelves; it is the gift of God.*

The Apoſtle, in his preceding diſcourſe, ſpeaks of the happy change which the Goſpel had made in the ſtate of theſe poor heathens. He freely acknowledges, on this occaſion, that the Jews were likewiſe in a very bad ſtate,

(1) Luke xvii. 10.

and if not entirely ſunk into the ſame enormities, yet *were by nature children of wrath, even as others* (1). So that, on the whole, both were (as it might be expreſſed by an eaſy and very proper figure) *dead in treſpaſſes and ſins* (2), indiſpoſed for any religious ſenſations and actions, and far more odious to God than a putrid carcaſe is to men. But he adds, that *God by his grace had ſaved them*; that his unmerited goodneſs had begun their ſalvation, and having thus far carried it on, would undoubtedly complete it: and that he might impreſs their minds the more deeply with it, he repeats it again, *By grace ye are ſaved.* So much was the apoſtle Paul concerned to inculcate a doctrine which ſome are ready to look upon as unneceſſary, and others perhaps as dangerous. But the Apoſtle's authority is abundantly enough to outweigh all that can be laid in the oppoſite ſcale. And it will appear from what I have further to offer, that if it had not in this view ſo direct a ſanction from his expreſs teſtimony, the concluſion would follow by the juſteſt deduction of argument, from principles ſo fundamental to the Goſpel, that they cannot be denied without ſubverting its whole ſuperſtructure.

And here, if I would treat the ſubject in its full extent, I might conſider what we mean by goſpel ſalvation: but I content myſelf at preſent with telling you, in a few words, that it implies "a deliverance from that ruinous and calamitous condition into which, by our apoſtacy from God, we are fallen;" and alſo includes "our being reſtored to the Divine favour, and all the happy effects of it, as extending not only to time but to eternity."

I might alſo conſider at large the nature of that faith to which the promiſes of ſalvation are made. But that is a ſubject you have heard ſo frequently explained, that I ſhall only remind you of that general account of it which has often been illuſtrated among you. "Saving faith," for of that we are now ſpeaking, "is ſuch a perſuaſion, that Chriſt is the great Meſſiah, the Son of God, and the Saviour of men; and ſuch a deſire and expectation of the bleſſings he has procured under that character; as ſhall engage us cheerfully to commit our ſouls

(1) Eph. ii. 1. (2) Verſe 1, 5.

to him in his appointed method of salvation, with a disposition cordially to devote ourselves to his service in all the ways of holy and evangelical obedience." The several branches of this definition are to be taken in their connexion with each other; and then there would be no difficulty in shewing, from the whole tenor of Scripture, that as nothing short of this can be acceptable to God, so wherever such a principle really is, the soul in which it is found is entitled to all the *blessings of the covenant of grace*, and has all the security for eternal happiness which the promise and oath of God can give. I might also easily shew you, that this is such a description of faith, as effectually secures the interest of practical religion, and guards against every presumptuous hope which may be formed in a soul destitute of a principle of universal holiness.

But waving the further prosecution of these preliminaries to our subject, which we have occasion so often to dilate upon, I shall make it my present business,

I. To consider how we may be said to be *saved through faith*.

II. How it appears that, in consequence of this, we are *saved by grace*.

III. I shall examine the force of the Apostle's additional argument, which is drawn from the consideration, that *faith is the gift of God*. And then,

IV. I shall collect some inferences from the whole. And may God *write on your hearts*, as *with a point of a diamond*, them and the premises on which they are founded!

I. We are to consider in what sense it may be said, that Christians are *saved through faith*.

Ye are, says the Apostle [σεσωσμενοι] *the saved ones*—the persons who have already received the beginnings of salvation, and the certain pledge of its complete accomplishment—[δια της πιστεως] *through, or by means of faith*.

Now I apprehend we shall take in the full sense of the Apostle's assertion, and of all that it is most necessary to believe and know on this subject; if we acknowledge and remember—that faith is absolutely necessary

in order to our ſalvation, ſo that we cannot poſſibly be ſaved without it;—and alſo, that every one who hath this faith ſhall undoubtedly obtain ſalvation.—But yet, that after all, a Chriſtian is not to aſcribe his ſalvation to the merit of his faith, but entirely to that of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the great Author and Finiſher of it. Theſe are three very obvious remarks: none is ſo weak but he may eaſily underſtand them; and yet I ſpeak very ſeriouſly, when I ſay, they ſeem to me to contain the ſum of all that is moſt important in the many large volumes which have been written on the ſubject.

1. "Faith is ſo abſolutely neceſſary to our ſalvation, that we cannot poſſibly be ſaved without it."

So our Lord tells us, in the moſt expreſs and emphatical forms of ſpeech: *If ye believe not that I am he, ye ſhall die in your ſins* (1): which moſt certainly implies the loſs of ſalvation, and indeed much more. And elſewhere the incarnate wiſdom and truth of God ſaith, *He that believeth not, ſhall be damned* (2). *He ſhall not*, as the Baptiſt ſays, *ſee life* (3): Nay, as our Lord himſelf expreſſes it in the ſtrongeſt terms, *He that believeth not, is condemned already;* not only on account of all thoſe other ſins, for which *the wrath of God*, to which he became immediately obnoxious, ſtill *abideth upon him;* but for this additional reaſon of dreadful provocation, *becauſe he hath not believed in the* venerable and majeſtic *name of the only begotten Son of God* (4).

Without this faith there is no knowledge that will ſave a man, though it ſhould be the moſt various, and the moſt exact knowledge of the moſt divine and important ſubjects which ever entered into a human mind. So far is it from this, that one need not ſcruple to ſay, a man might as reaſonably expect to be ſaved by ſkill in the mathematics, or in muſic, as by ſkill in polemical divinity, though it were in its moſt eſſential branches, if, after all, it were no more than mere ſpeculation.

And it is no leſs certain, that without this faith, morality will not ſave a man, be it ever ſo unexceptionable, be it ever ſo exemplary. This is indeed much better

(1) John viii. 24. (2) Mark xvi. 16. (3) John iii. 36.
(4) Verſe 18.

than the former; but if there be nothing more, it will be fatally ineffectual to the great purpose which we have now in view. I speak not now, as you may easily imagine, of such a continual and uniform obedience to the Divine will, as perfectly answers the demands of God's original law; for no man ever has attained to this, or will ever, in fact, attain to it in this world: but I speak of what the world generally calls morality, a freedom from gross impiety and scandalous vice, yea, though attended with the practice of the humane and social virtues. This is indeed amiable and honourable so far as it goes; and will undoubtedly have its reward, in the pleasure of such a conduct, in the esteem and love of mankind, and in the possession of many temporal advantages and blessings, which in the common course of Providence are connected with it. But alas it is, after all, a very partial and imperfect thing: and as a man may be temperate in himself; just, faithful, and benevolent to men; without having any appearance of religion towards God, or making any pretence to it; so he may have some sense of God upon his spirit, which one would think none but an Atheist could entirely avoid, while for the neglect, or it may be the rejection of the Gospel, he stands exposed to its sentence of condemnation. If Christ be not regarded as the rock on which we build our hopes, the foundation is sandy, and will be ruinous; and if we do not receive Christ by such a faith as I described above, we offer him a most insolent affront, by pretending to put our unsanctified and rebellious hearts under his patronage.

We see then, that without this faith we cannot possibly be saved. It is the counterpart of this important truth, which we now add, when we observe,

2. That "every one who hath this faith shall undoubted be saved."

You will here be sure to observe, that I say, "Every one who hath this faith," meaning the faith described above; which includes in it our devoting ourselves to Christ in the way of holy obedience, as an essential part of it; and consequently there can be no reason to say, as some have wildly represented the matter, "A believer

ſhall be ſaved, let him live as he will;" which is either a moſt notorious and miſchievous falſehood, or an expreſs contradiction in terms. If the word *believer* be ſuppoſed to ſignify one who merely aſſents to the truth of the Goſpel in ſpeculation, nothing can be more falſe, and the whole Epiſtle of James, to omit a thouſand particular paſſages of other Scriptures, is a demonſtration of the contrary: but if it be meant, as I ſuppoſe it generally is, of a true believer, it is an expreſs contradiction; and is as abſurd as it would be to ſay a really good man ſhould be ſaved, though he ſhould at the ſame time be a very bad one. For no one can, in the ſenſe deſcribed above, which is the ſcriptural ſenſe, be a true believer, but one who wills to live in a holy manner; ſince the ſame operation of God upon the ſoul, which diſpoſes it to believe, ſanctifies the will, and though freely, yet effectually leads it into a prevailing determination, to make the ſervice of God the buſineſs of life: or, in other words, it is plain from the whole tenor of Scripture, that a ſaving is alſo a ſanctifying faith; but there cannot be a ſanctifying faith in an unholy heart; neither can there be a holy heart, where there is a wicked life; for *the tree is known by its fruits* (1): and when we ſpeak of the heart, we mean not merely the affections, but the will, the determinations of which are indeed the very actions of which we ſpeak, ſo far as they are properly ours. There cannot, therefore, be a more inſolent falſehood, than the pretence to holineſs of heart, where that of the life is wanting; or to ſaving faith in the abſence of both. There may indeed be an error in the underſtanding as to ſome precepts of Chriſt, or a falſe judgment as to ſome circumſtance attending ourſelves; and that may produce ſome error in practice: there may be inſtances in which the infirmity of human nature, and the ſurpriſe or force of a temptation, may betray a man into particular miſcarriages, contrary to the general bent and tenor of his heart and life: but there cannot poſſibly be, in the conduct of any true believer, an habitual, allowed, and cuſtomary diſobedience to any one commandment of our bleſſed Redeemer.

(1) Luke vi. 44.

This you must first admit as a necessary preliminary; and when it is admitted, you may very securely build upon it this great truth, that "whosoever hath such a faith as this, shall certainly be saved." Whatever his former guilt may have been, though ever so various, ever so long continued, ever so aggravated; though crimes had been committed *from which he could never have been justified by the law of Moses* (1), but would have been doomed by it to an infamous *death without mercy* (2): yet, on exerting such an act of faith in Christ, the believer immediately stands a justified person before God, previous to any good works of his own: yea, though he should die before he have an opportunity of performing any, in this case (which, if ever it happen, is, by the way, the only case in which good works are not, according to the Gospel covenant, necessary to an actual admission into heaven) an omniscient *God calls the things that are not as if they were* (3), and accepts those fruits of holiness which he discerned in their root or their bud, though he did not afford time for their coming to maturity. And if life be spared, the believer continuing such, continues in a state of favour and acceptance with God, though there may be remaining imperfections in him; and though he may see reason to complain, that he *cannot do the things which he would*, but that *the law in his members* struggles *against the law of his mind* (4), yet he shall finally be saved, whatever difficulties are to be broken through, and how long soever his trials may continue: and his salvation, as a believer, is as certain, from the whole current of the word of God, as the condemnation of the unbeliever, which we proved above. *He that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life* (5); he hath it already in its beginnings and earnests, and he shall, ere long, rise to the complete possession of it. For *Christ gives unto his sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of his hand* (6). But it is of importance that I add,

3. That "after all a believer is not to ascribe his salvation to the merit and excellency of this faith itself, but

(1) Acts xiii. 39. (2) Heb. x. 28. (3) Rom. iv. 17.
(4) Rom. vii. 23. (5) John iii. 36. (6) John x. 28.

entirely to the merit and righteouſneſs of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and the free grace of God, as manifeſted in it."

We know it is the conſtant doctrine of the New Teſtament, that *God hath made us accepted in the beloved* (1); and that *of him we are in Chriſt Jeſus, who of God is made unto us wiſdom, and righteouſneſs, and ſanctification, and redemption* (2): ſo that we are *juſtified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in him* (3). And if we ſhould pretend to ſay that we are accepted of God for faith, as the meritorious cauſe of that acceptance, we muſt contradict the whole courſe of the Apoſtle Paul's argument, eſpecially in the fourth chapter of his Epiſtle to the Romans, where he ſtrongly contends that *Abraham was not juſtified by works*, becauſe if he were, *he would have ſomething to glory in before God* (4). Now if he had been *juſtified by faith*, as his own meritorious act, there would have been as much room for him to have gloried in that, as in any work, whether ceremonial or moral obedience. And in the ſame Epiſtle he declares again, where he is ſpeaking of the ſalvation of God's choſen remnant, that *if it be of works, then it is no more grace; otherwiſe work is no more work* (5); the meaning of which plainly is, that no man can at once be juſtified by grace, and by works: and on the ſame principles we may alſo ſay, no man can be juſtified by the merit of faith, and yet by grace. If therefore it evidently appear from the text, and our farther reaſoning upon it, that our juſtification and acceptance with God is to be aſcribed to grace, all pretence of merit in the act of believing muſt of courſe be given up.

This will indeed farther appear, if we conſider what it is that faith does in order to our being juſtified. You very well know it is repreſented in Scripture as receiving Chriſt. *To as many as received him, to them gave he power* (or privilege) *to become the ſons of God, even to them that believe on his name* (6). Now it muſt be flagrantly abſurd to talk of reſting upon an act, whereby we do indeed receive and reſt upon another. And therefore, however inaccurately ſome may have expreſſed themſelves on this head, I cannot ſuppoſe that any wiſe

(1) Eph. i. 6. (2) 1 Cor. i. 30. (3) Rom. iii. 24.
(4) Rom. iv. 2. (5) Rom. xi. 6. (6) John i. 12.

and conſiderate Chriſtian ever meant to aſſert the contrary to what I am now endeavouring to prove. We do indeed find the Apoſtle ſpeaking of *faith* as imputed for *righteouſneſs* (1) : but it ſeems to me, that the moſt natural ſenſe of that expreſſion may be fixed, and the propriety of it may be admitted, upon the principles I have now been laying down.

All manner of imputation ſeems to be a metaphor, taken from books of account between creditor and debtor.* To impute any act of ſin, or of obedience, is therefore properly no other than to ſet it down to his account; the great God of heaven and earth is repreſented in Scripture, with humble condeſcenſion to our manner of acting and conceiving of things, as keeping a moſt exact book of records and accounts, in which thoſe things are regiſtered concerning every one of us, which he will bring into that final review and ſurvey by which our characters and ſtates ſhall finally be determined. And as the moſt exact and perfect obedience is a debt which we owe him, as our great Creator, Benefactor, and Governor; ſo on the breach of his law we owe him ſome proper ſatisfaction for it. In this view we are all charged as debtors, poor, miſerable, inſolvent debtors, in the book of God: innumerable ſins are imputed, or ſet down to our account; and were things to go on in this courſe, we ſhould, ere long, be arreſted by the Divine juſtice; and being found incapable of payment, ſhould be caſt into the priſon of hell, to come out no more. But God, in pity to this our calamitous ſtate, has found out a ſurety and a ranſom for us, and has provided a ſatisfaction in the obedience and ſufferings of his Son; which is what we mean by the righteouſneſs of Chriſt; or his active and paſſive obedience. It is with a gracious regard to this, to expreſs his high complacency in it, and (if I may ſo ſpeak) his pleaſing remembrance of it, that

(1) Rom. iv. 22.

* From mercantile affairs the metaphor is ſometimes applied to judicial; as crimes to be accounted for are alſo ſometimes called debts; but when the matter is well underſtood in one view, it is eaſy to apply it to the other.

all who are finally juſtified and ſaved, meet with Divine acceptance and favour; or to purſue the metaphor opened above, *the righteouſneſs of Chriſt* is, in the book of God, imputed or ſet down to their account as that by which the debt is balanced, and they are entitled to ſuch favours as righteous perſons might expect from God. But then, it is an invariable rule in the Divine proceedings, that this righteouſneſs, or this atonement and ſatisfaction of Chriſt (for I think it matters but little by which of theſe names it ſhall be called) be a means of delivering thoſe, and only thoſe, that believe. Purſuant, therefore, to the aforeſaid metaphor, when any particular perſon believes, this is ſet down to his account, as a moſt important article, or as a memorandum (if I may ſo expreſs it) in the book of God's remembrance, that ſuch an one is now actually become a believer, and therefore is now entitled to juſtification and life by Chriſt. In this ſenſe his faith is imputed for righteouſneſs. Yet it is not regarded by God as the grand conſideration which balances the account, or indeed as paying any of the former debt, which it is impoſſible it ſhould; but only as that which, according to the gracious conſtitution of the Goſpel, gives a man a claim to that which Chriſt has paid, and which God has graciouſly allowed as a valuable conſideration, in regard to which he may honourably pardon and accept all who ſhall apply to him in his appointed way, or in the way of humble believing, as faith was deſcribed above.

This appears to me a juſt and eaſy view of the goſpel doctrine on this head; and it is ſo important diſtinctly to underſtand it, that I hope you will excuſe my having repreſented it in ſo many words. And this is, on the whole, the ſenſe in which we may be ſaid to be ſaved through faith. None can be ſaved without it:—and every one who has it, is entitled to ſalvation; but not in virtue of the merit and excellency of faith itſelf, but entirely for the ſake of what Chriſt has done and ſuffered; or, in other words, by the imputation of his perfect righteouſneſs, the merit of which is graciouſly applied to this or that particular perſon upon his believing: ſo that upon this he is juſtified; and by the general tenor of the Goſpel, is to be looked on as a righteous perſon; or as

one who shall, on the whole, be treated as such, and shall, ere long, be publicly declared righteous before the assembled world, and be freed from all the remainders of that penalty which sin has brought upon us: and though, for wise and good reasons, he be for a while continued under some of them, the time of that continuance is so short, and his succeeding happiness so lasting, that the former being, as it were, swallowed up by the latter in the all-comprehending views of God, he is spoken of by him as if his justification and salvation were already complete. *Ye are saved through faith.*—But having stated this, the method I proposed leads me,

II. To shew, that in consequence of our being thus *saved through faith*, we may properly be said to be *saved by grace.*

Now the connexion between these will appear very evident; if we consider, that faith cannot make any atonement to the offended justice of God, so as to give us any legal claim even to the pardon of our sins upon the account of it:—much less can it confer any obligation upon God to bestow on us eternal blessedness:—nor would there indeed have been any room to mention faith in this whole affair, if God had not contrived such a method of salvation, and done that to effect it, which none but himself could have done.

1. "Faith cannot make any atonement to the offended justice of God, so as to give us any legal claim even to the pardon of our sins upon the account of it;" so that if we are saved *through faith*, we must, in this view, acknowledge it to be *by grace.*

The law of so wise, so great, and so venerable a Sovereign as the blessed God is, must of course suppose some awful sanctions, some solemn denunciations of wrath and vengeance on those who presumptuously transgress it. And it is certainly the part of God, as a wise, holy, and gracious legislator, to maintain its honour when it has been violated; and not to treat an offending creature as innocent and righteous, without some provision made for the satisfaction of his injured justice: in the demand of which satisfaction God does not express any thing of

a ſanguinary and revengeful diſpoſition: far be ſo blaſphemous a thought from us! But he diſplays a ſteady regard to that order, which, as the Great Sovereign, it becomes him, for the benefit of his ſubjects, as well as for the glory of his own name and government, to preſerve in the moral world, i. e. among his reaſonable creatures. Some ample and honourable amends muſt therefore be made in order to the diſcharge of a guilty and condemned criminal. And is faith ſuch an amends? Take it in its utmoſt extent, as an aſſent to whatever he propoſes, and a ſubmiſſion to whatever he demands, to the very utmoſt of our capacity; this, in our preſent circumſtances, is but our duty, and would have been ſo, had we never offended him: and the performance of it, with whatever readineſs, exactneſs, and conſtancy, cannot poſſibly atone for the violation of it in times paſt; as the payment of what, for the future, becomes due to any creditor, cannot diſcharge a debt formerly contracted, and remaining unbalanced upon account: therefore it is, that we read of *Chriſt's being made a ſin-offering for us, though he* himſelf *knew no ſin, that we might be made the righteouſneſs of God in him* (1); i. e. that we might be accepted of God as righteous, being conſidered as, by faith, united to him, and intereſted in his righteouſneſs and grace. In teſtimony of which, God expreſsly requires that every ſinner ſhould ſue out his pardon *in Chriſt's name* (2): and ſhould preſent himſelf before him as one that has *obtained redemption through Chriſt's blood*, and is *accepted in the beloved* (3), *who of God is made unto us righteouſneſs* (4): a ſcheme utterly inconſiſtent with that of our being juſtified and ſaved by any merit or excellence in faith, conſidered as an act of atonement made by us, by which the guilt of our offences is cancelled, and our pardon bought by us. It is yet more apparent,

2. That "faith can confer no obligation upon God to beſtow on us eternal bleſſedneſs;" in which view alſo our ſalvation through it muſt appear to be by grace.

That eternal bleſſedneſs is deſigned for every believing ſoul, is, through the Divine goodneſs, as apparent, as that

(1) 2 Cor. v. 21. (2) Luke xxiv. 47. (3) Eph. i. 6, 7. (4) 1 Cor. i. 30.

faith itſelf is ever required in Scripture. But can we ſay of eternal life, that it is the wages of faith? I much queſtion whether it could have been claimed as wages due to us on account of our obedience, had that obedience been perfect in its kind and degree: nor do I think it could, with any confidence, have been expected, unleſs God had been pleaſed, by a gracious covenant, to promiſe it: otherwiſe, all that the completeſt obedience could have claimed, would only have been favour continued, or at moſt favour increaſing, during the time in which we continued to behave ourſelves well. Much leſs then can we imagine, that when we had once broken the law of God, faith, though for the future attended with the moſt perfect efficacy, and productive of the moſt ſteady courſe of obedience in all after inſtances, could give us any ſuch claim. Leaſt of all then can we have any room to pretend it, on account of a faith which operates in ſo imperfect a manner, and produces an holineſs ſo ſadly defective in many inſtances, as we muſt acknowledge our own to be. That we ſhould be admitted into the glorious preſence of God, and be fixed in a ſtate of immutable ſecurity and felicity, where ſin and ſorrow ſhall no more invade us, but where *God will appoint* for us *ſalvation* itſelf *for walls and bulwarks* (1), is ſo glorious a triumph of the Divine goodneſs, that the ſoul which knows itſelf, and attentively looks on this *far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*, is aſtoniſhed and humbled in the views of it, and finds it no ſmall ſtretch of faith, to be able to believe, that God does indeed intend it for ſo ſinful a creature: ſo far is the believer from arrogating any thing of this kind to himſelf, as if his own faith had any degree of merit or excellence proportionable to it. But we muſt obſerve once more, to complete the argument,

3. That "there had been no room to mention faith at all in this affair, had not God graciouſly contrived ſuch a method of ſalvation, and done that to effect it, which none but himſelf could do."

Faith receives our Lord Jeſus Chriſt; it is its great office, and its great glory to do it. But how could it

(1) Iſa. xxvi. 1.

have received him, unleſs he had been given? and how could he have been given in this view, but by the appointment of the Father, in concurrence with his own free and moſt gracious conſent?—Faith apprehends and ſubmits to the goſpel plan of ſalvation by the obedience and ſufferings of the Son of God; yea, it not only ſubmits to it, but rejoices and glories in it. But who could have exhibited, who could have contrived, who could have executed ſuch a plan, unleſs it had been formed and determined in the counſels of eternal love?—Admit faith to be ever ſo voluntary, and, ſo far as is poſſible to a creature, ever ſo independent an act, can we any of us ſay, that there was ſo much merit and excellency in that act, or in any of its ſubſequent fruits, that God upon the foreſight of it would ſay, "Theſe creatures, guilty and condemned as they appear, will be ſo ready to receive the intimations of my will, that they will fully deſerve that I ſhould ſave them at any rate; they will deſerve even that my Son ſhould become incarnate, and die as a ſacrifice, to make way for their happineſs." Can any of you, Sirs, imagine this to have been the caſe? Or can you hear it even ſuppoſed, without finding ſomething ſhocking in the very repreſentation of it? The bleſſed Paul, I am ſure, had very different views when he ſaid, *God hath predeſtinated us to the adoption of children by Jeſus Chriſt unto himſelf, according to the good pleaſure of his will, to the praiſe of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved* (1). And the Apoſtle John had other notions of it, when he ſaid, full as his gracious heart was of the moſt lively ſentiments of gratitude and zeal, *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and ſent his Son to be the propitiation for our ſins* (2).

Theſe arguments would prove, that our ſalvation through faith is by grace, even though it could not be added, that *this faith is the gift of God.* How much more convincing then muſt the concluſion be, when that conſideration is added to the reſt!

But as the illuſtration of this, which was the third general we mentioned, will require more time than can properly be allowed to the remainder of this Diſcourſe,

(1) Eph. i. 5, 6. (2) 1 John iv. 10.

I will reſerve it to another; and conclude for the preſent with exhorting you ſeriouſly to examine, whether you have this principle of faith in your hearts, without which your ſalvation is, in preſent circumſtances, an impoſſible thing, and with which it is inviolably ſecure.

It is a melancholy, but moſt obvious truth, that *all men have not faith* (1). There are thouſands and ten thouſands under the Goſpel, with regard to whom its miniſters have reaſon to complain, *Who hath believed our report, and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed* (2)? On whom has its power been ſo exerted, as to conquer the natural incredulity and obſtinacy of their hearts? Are you, Sirs, of that number, or of the number of thoſe who, as the Scripture expreſſes it, *have believed through grace* (3)? It is the queſtion on which your eternal ſtate will turn at laſt: and therefore you would do well to examine it now. And I would beſeech you to endeavour to trace it, in its *production*. and in its *effects*; or, in other words, to inquire—how it has been introduced into your minds——and how it has wrought there. You may ſurely diſcover it, in the one or in the other, if it be your prevailing character; and I hope many of you will be able to diſcover it in both.

(1.) Can you trace faith "in its production and advance in your ſouls?"

Do you recollect any time in which you had no thoughts of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and no workings of affection towards him? And has there been any alteration in your minds in this reſpect? All true faith in Chriſt is founded on a conviction of ſin, and of the miſery to which you are expoſed by it. Have you indeed been brought to this conviction? Have you heard, and (if I may be allowed the expreſſion) have you felt yourſelves condemned by the ſentence of a righteous, a holy, yea, of a merciful God? And have you, by that apprehenſion, been ſtirred up *to cry* for pardon and deliverance? You have heard of Chriſt under the character of a Saviour; but I put it to your conſciences, have you ſeriouſly viewed him under that character? and from a full perſuaſion

(1) 2 Theſſ. iii. 2. (2) Iſa. liii. 1. (3) Acts xviii. 27.

of his correſpondency, when conſidered in this view, to all the neceſſities of your caſe, and all the exigencies of your ſouls, have you entered into any treaty with him? Recollect it ſeriouſly. Have you ever preſented yourſelves before God, with an humble and cordial regard to Chriſt? And do you know what it is ſecretly and ſincerely to repoſe your ſouls upon the merit of his obedience, and the efficacy of his blood, with humble acknowledgment of your own guilt, with entire reſignation of your own righteouſneſs, as utterly unworthy of being mentioned before God, and with a cordial and joyful reſolution to devote yourſelves to his ſervice as long as you have any being, and through time and eternity to teſtify your gratitude by a conſtant ſeries of obedience?

If you can trace ſuch a proceſs of thought and experience as this, you have great reaſon to conclude, that you experimentally know what faith is; and that through faith you are in the way to ſalvation. Yet it is always to be remembered, that faith is to be *ſhewn by its works* (1). Give me leave, therefore, farther to inquire,

(2.) Whether you can trace "the genuine effects of it in your hearts and lives?"

You *believe in Chriſt*: but has that faith in him produced a continual and habitual intercourſe with him? I ſpeak not of an intercourſe abſolutely uninterrupted; for that the preſent ſtate of human life will not admit. But has it produced frequently repeated and direct acts of application to him, and converſe with him? One can hardly imagine how it is poſſible for a true believer to ſuffer theſe to be long, and often intermitted: eſpecially to ſuch a degree, that days and weeks and months ſhould paſs, as if all the buſineſs between Chriſt and his ſoul were quite finiſhed, and he and his Lord were parted by conſent, till death, or ſome very urgent and extraordinary circumſtance, renewed the interviews between them.—I would aſk farther, Has this faith, to which you pretend, produced a reſemblance to Chriſt's example, and an obedience to his precepts, in the courſe of your lives? You know that true faith is operative; and you know, in the general, the genius and deſign of Chriſtianity. I

(1) Jam. ii. 18.

would demand of your conſciences how far you comply with it? Is your temper and conduct in the main ſuch as you well know our Lord intended, that the temper and conduct of his people ſhould be? Is it devout and ſpiritual, juſt and charitable, ſober and temperate, humble and cautious? Is religion your care, and do you maintain an habitual watchfulneſs over yourſelves, that your behaviour may be agreeable and honourable to your profeſſion?——Once more, Are you ardently purſuing greater attainments in the Chriſtian temper and life, ſo that you may be ſpoken of as *hungering and thirſting after righteouſneſs* (1)?

If you can anſwer ſuch inquiries as theſe in the affirmative, you have a great deal of reaſon to hope that faith is yours, and ſalvation is yours. But if you cannot ſo anſwer them, a confident aſſurance that you ſhall be ſaved, is ſo far from being faith, that it is preſumption and folly; and ſo far from being any ſecurity to you, will only prove adding ſin to ſin. That confidence, by whatever name you may affect to call it, is indeed unbelief; unbelief of God's threatenings, while it vainly pretends to truſt his promiſes: For he hath not more expreſsly ſaid, that *he who believeth on the Son, hath everlaſting life;* than he has added, that *he who is diſobedient to the Son,* ſhall not ſee life* (2). While ſin reigns in your life, and thereby appears to reign in your heart, did you pretend a revelation from Heaven as to the truth of your faith, every wiſe man would conclude that pretended revelation was a deluſion; and that how ſolemnly ſoever it might be aſcribed to the Spirit of truth and holineſs, it really proceeded from the father of lies.

Excuſe the plainneſs with which fidelity to God, and to you, obliges me to ſpeak on this head; and be aſſured, that it proceeds from a real concern to ſecure the honour of that glorious doctrine of SALVATION BY GRACE, which I have now been labouring to eſtabliſh, and the demonſtration and improvement of which I ſhall farther purſue in the enſuing Diſcourſe.

(1) Matt. v. 6. * Ο απειθων τω υιω. (2) John iii. 36.

SERMON II.

FAITH IS THE GIFT OF GOD.

EPHES. II. 8.

For by grace ye are ſaved through faith; and that not of yourſelves; it is the gift of God.

IN the works of nature, many of thoſe things, which to a ſuperficial eye may appear as defects, will on a careful inquiry be found to be marks of conſummate wiſdom, and kind contrivance. And on the ſame principle, I confeſs, I have often thought there is reaſon to be thankful for the very inaccuracies of Scripture. The haſte in which the Apoſtle Paul was, by the multiplicity of his affairs, obliged to write, has given us an opportunity of viewing more of his heart in his epiſtles, than we might perhaps have ſeen if he had frequently reviewed and corrected them. Thoſe parentheſes in particular, and thoſe repetitions, which render the ſtyle leſs elegant, and the ſenſe ſometimes leſs conſpicuous, do nevertheleſs ſhew to greater advantage, how deeply thoſe thoughts were impreſſed upon his mind which he introduces in ſuch a manner. And of this the words which I have now been reading are an inſtance. In the courſe of his preceding argument, a few verſes before, while he is telling the Epheſians, that *God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved them, even when they were dead in ſins, had quickened them together with Chriſt;* he adds, by way of parentheſis, *By grace ye are ſaved* (1): and when he goes

(1) Eph. ii. 4.

on to say, they were *raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus*, he further tells them, that this was with an intention, *that in the ages to come* God *might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us, through Jesus Christ* (1): nay, his heart was so full of the subject of grace, free and astonishing grace, that as if all this was not enough, by a most glorious and edifying tautology, (if I may be allowed so to speak) he inserts the words of my text, *By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.*

I have already shewn you, from these words, in what sense we may be said to be saved through faith:—and I have also proved, that in consequence of this it is evident we must be saved by grace; since faith being incapable of satisfying the demands of God's injured justice, can much less merit such a recompence as eternal life; nor can it indeed have any efficacy, or any place at all in this affair, otherwise than by God's free constitution and gracious appointment.—I then concluded with observing, that this argument would have a convincing force, even though faith were ever so entirely an act of our own; or that we had no more support or assistance from God in forming and exerting it, than we have in any of the common actions of natural life. But I am now to shew, that even this is not the case; but that a new proof of our being *saved by grace* arises from considering,

III. The argument which the Apostle suggests in the close of the text, that even *this faith is not of ourselves*; but *it is the gift of God.*

I am sensible that some endeavour to invalidate and supersede all this part of the argument, by giving another turn to this last clause, referring it in general to our salvation by faith, as if it had been said, "Our being thus *saved by grace through faith* (as I have just now said) *is not of ourselves*, but *it is the gift of God.*" But I apprehend that an impartial reader would not be willing to allow of this interpretation; which makes the latter clause a mere repetition of what was said before, and a repetition of it in less proper and expressive words. None

(1) Eph. ii. 6, 7.

could imagine, that our being ſaved through faith was of ourſelves; or that we ever could ourſelves conſtitute and appoint ſuch a way of ſalvation, which was indeed fixed ſo long before we had a being. But faith being really our own act, it was highly pertinent to obſerve, that the excellency of this act is not to be arrogated to ourſelves, but is to be aſcribed to God. All that are acquainted with the genius of the original muſt acknowledge this is a conſtruction which it will very fairly admit. And we ſhall prove, in the proceſs of this argument, that other Scriptures expreſsly declare the truth, which this interpretation makes to be the meaning of the words.

Faith may be called *the gift of God*, as it is God that reveals the great objects of faith—that brings the mind to attend to them—that conquers our natural averſion to the goſpel method of ſalvation, and ſo implants faith in the ſoul;—And alſo as it is he that carries it on to more perfect degrees, and improves its vigour and activity.

1. Faith may be called *the gift of God*, "as it is God who reveals the great *objects of faith*."

Human reaſon is but weak and imperfect, and has indeed interwoven the traces of its own weakneſs with many of the faireſt monuments of its ſtrength. Even in its moſt advanced ſtate, among the moſt learned and polite nations of antiquity, it is deplorably evident how far it was from diſcovering the ſeveral branches of natural religion in its purity, extent, and order. And to ſpeak freely, it ſhone more brightly in almoſt every other view than in that which is its nobleſt end: I mean what relates to God and immortality. It has indeed produced many admirable poems, and compoſed many moving orations: it has woven many exquiſite threads of argument, with which the ſubtileſt diſputants have entangled each other, and have often entangled themſelves: and much more uſeful it has been, in adorning the face of the earth, in ſubduing the ſea, in managing the winds, and meeting out the heavens. But this rich vein of knowledge, this mine of holy and divine treaſure, lies too deep for human diſcovery.—If any aſk, *Where ſhall* this *wiſ-*

dom be found, and where is the place of this *underſtanding* (1)? It muſt be granted, that *it is a path, which the vulture's eye hath not ſeen* (2): *man knoweth not the price thereof, neither is it found in the land of the living. The depth* of human ſcience *ſays, It is not in me: and the ſea,* with all the moſt improved countries that lie upon it, muſt *ſay, It is not with me* (3): for *eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him* (4). There were no principles on which to proceed, in the inveſtigation of this important knowledge: none could ever have learned, that God had formed counſels of mercy and peace towards apoſtate creatures: none could ever, on natural principles, have diſcovered the very exiſtence of the Son and the Spirit." How much leſs then could they have known, or imagined, that the Son of God ſhould have undertaken to redeem us with his own precious blood; and the Spirit be ſent to manage affairs, as the great agent of the Redeemer's kingdom; in conſequence of whoſe gracious acts and influences the ſoul ſhould be ſavingly renewed and transformed, and then carried on with a growing pace in the way to heaven, till it was received to the ſeparate ſtate of holy and triumphant ſpirits at death, and to complete glory at the reſurrection of the dead? All the men upon earth could never, by their own natural ſagacity, have diſcovered any of theſe particulars; how much leſs then could the whole ſyſtem have been diſcovered?—but God himſelf has graciouſly *revealed them by his Spirit* (5): and as he was pleaſed miraculouſly to interpoſe to give this revelation to the world; ſo he has interpoſed by remarkable providences to ſend to us ſuch clear notices of it; and to ſend theſe notices ſo early too, as to throw the prejudice of education among us this way, rather than the contrary. And conſidering how powerful thoſe prejudices are, and how many have fallen into ruin by them, this will appear no ſmall matter to a conſiderate perſon; eſpecially when he ſurveys the ſtate of the world in general, and conſiders how few nations and countries there are in which this is the caſe; and in what various forms of moſt per-

(1) Job xxviii. 12. (2) Verſe 7. (3) Verſe 13, 14.
(4) 1 Cor. ii. 9. (5) Verſe 10.

nicious and deſtructive errors the generality of mankind are trained up from their tendereſt infancy.—I would conclude this head with obſerving, that "whatever particular advantages we have enjoyed, they are all to be traced up to the diſtinguiſhing goodneſs of God to us." If wiſe and pious parents, if ſkilful, zealous, and faithful miniſters, have been the inſtruments of working faith in our ſouls, *this alſo cometh forth from the Lord of Hoſts*; who taught their minds to conceive, and their lips to ſpeak, and who opened our hearts to receive inſtruction. And this leads me to add,

2. That as God reveals the great objects of faith, ſo "it is he alſo that inclines the mind to attend to them;" on which account faith may be further ſaid to be *the gift of God.*

The great objects of faith are, and by their nature muſt be, to us inviſible; while thoſe of ſenſe ſtrike ſo ſtrongly on the mind, that it is no wonder we are apt often to forget the other. And when a man is conſcious to himſelf that the firſt recollection and acquaintance with them muſt be painful, and muſt be attended with remorſe and fear, how neceſſary ſoever that pain may be, it is too natural to draw back from it. And we may eaſily conceive that Satan, the great enemy of men's eternal happineſs, will exert all his artifices to prejudice them againſt it, and to divert them from it.

Accordingly I make no doubt but that many of you, and eſpecially young perſons, have experienced this. You have found, that when you firſt began to be ſenſible you were in a loſt and miſerable ſtate; when you began firſt to hearken to the tidings of deliverance by Chriſt, and to inquire into the way of ſalvation exhibited in the goſpel; many circumſtances aroſe to take off your attention from them. You found Satan endeavouring to ſteal away the good ſeed *out of your hearts, leſt you ſhould believe and be ſaved:* and joining the efforts of various of his inſtruments, to allure, or to terrify you from religion. To what then will you aſcribe it, that you have been able to break through all theſe ſnares? To what will you aſcribe it, that when you had perhaps laboured to ſtifle convictions in your own hearts, they have returned upon you with greater power than before? and

though you have endeavoured all you could to ſhift them off, yet you have found them every where purſuing you; keeping your eyes from ſleep during the watches of the night, or breaking in upon you in the morning with the returning light; or following you perhaps into thoſe ſcenes of buſineſs, or of vain converſation, to which you have fled as a refuge from them? You muſt undoubtedly *aſcribe it* to the *God of the ſpirits of all fleſh*, that you have thus been taught to *conſider your ways*; and that your ſpirits have been ſo deeply impreſſed with concerns which multitudes, whom the world reckons among the wiſeſt of mankind, are entirely thoughtleſs about, and which, perhaps, you yourſelves were once among the firſt to deſpiſe.

3. Faith may be further called *the gift of God*, as "it is he that conquers the natural averſion which there is in men's hearts to the goſpel method of ſalvation, when it comes to be underſtood and apprehended."

That method is ſo wiſe, ſo rational, and ſo gracious, that one would imagine every reaſonable creature ſhould embrace it with delight. Yet the degenerate heart of man draws its ſtrongeſt objections againſt it, from thoſe things which are really its greateſt glory.

It is the way of humility, and of holineſs: and a haughty and licentious heart riſes againſt it in each of theſe views. To be ſtripped of all the pride of human nature, to ſtand guilty and helpleſs before God, and in an entire renunciation of all ſelf-dependence, to ſeek righteouſneſs and ſtrength in another, is, to ſpirits naturally ſo arrogant as ours, a hard ſaying ſcarcely to be borne: to give up our own wills, to be checked and controlled in all things by the divine authority, to engage in an habitual courſe of ſelf-denial, *to crucify the fleſh with its affections and luſts*, is hard indeed. No wonder, therefore, if we are taught in Scripture to acknowledge the agency and interpoſition of a Divine hand, when this is wrought in us; when we not only feel ſome tendency of ſoul towards it, ſome tranſient and ineffectual purpoſe, but when a permanent principle of this kind is implanted in our hearts, ſo that our lives are governed by it. Hence the Scripture ſpeaks of thoſe to whom it is given,

not merely to hear of Christ, but to *believe in him* (1); and pathetically describes *the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe*, as *an energy of mighty power*, like that *which wrought in Christ, when God raised him from the dead* (2): when he lay a cold corpse in the grave, his blood drained out, and his side pierced to the very heart, think of that mighty energy which then re-animated your Lord; and you see an emblem of that which raises us to a divine life, and enables us to act that life in faith on a crucified and a risen Redeemer. Thus, as it is said in one place, that *God gave to the Gentiles repentance unto life*; it is also said in another, that *he purified their hearts by faith*; plainly implying, that there is in both an interposition of Divine power. Now, certainly, if he implants this principle in our hearts, that salvation, which he has connected with it, must be entirely of grace: which will further appear, if we consider,

4. That "it is God who carries on this blessed work, and maintains this divine principle."

It is through much tribulation and danger, through much opposition and difficulty, that the Christian *must enter into the kingdom of God* (3). When he begins to set sail heaven-ward, *the prince of the power of the air* endeavours *to raise those storms*, which shall, if possible, oblige him to *make shipwreck of faith, and of a good conscience* (4): nevertheless he must *endure to the end*, or he cannot *be saved* (5). And how is he enabled thus to persevere? Surely it is through the continued communications of Divine grace to him; or as the Apostle with admirable propriety expresses it, he *obtains mercy of the Lord to be faithful* (6). It is by this means that he obtains the victory: and while he overcomes the world, and conquers the remaining corruptions of his heart, he must still humbly own, that in the one and the other instance he is *more than a conqueror through him that loved him* (7). In short, he will be ready to acknowledge, that *having obtained help of God*, he *continues to this day* (8): and will mark out, as it were, the several stages of his journey, by erecting at the end of each a stone of remembrance and thankfulness, and *saying, Hitherto the Lord has helped me* (9).

(1) Phil. i. 29. (2) Eph. i. 19, 20. (3) Acts xiv. 22.
(4) 1 Tim. i. 19. (5) Matt. xxiv. 13. (6) 1 Cor. vii. 25.
(7) Rom. viii. 37. (8) Acts xxvi. 22. (9) 1 Sam. vii. 12.

And now, my friends, you may see the evidence of this great truth, that *by grace we are saved through faith*, appearing in its complete light: and permit me once more to repeat the summary of the whole argument, that it may be more deeply, and more distinctly, impressed upon your minds.—How much soever faith may be supposed to be our own unassisted act, so far as the act of any creature is unassisted, it could make no atonement to the injured justice of God, and much less confer any obligation upon him to bestow on us eternal life;—nor had there been any room to mention it at all in the whole affair, if God had not contrived such a method of salvation, and done that to effect it, which none but himself could do:—much more will it appear to be of grace, when we add, that faith itself is the gift of God,—as he reveals the great objects of it;—as he brings the mind to attend to them; as he conquers the natural aversion of the heart to the gospel method of salvation;—and carries on the work of faith in the soul, till it ends in complete salvation. It now remains,

IV. That I conclude with some obvious, but useful, inferences from the whole.

And here now, if it is *by grace* that *we are saved through faith*, then certainly we may infer from hence,—that we have no reason to glory,—but should be thankful for the grace by which we are saved;—that we must wholly be without excuse, if we neglect this method of salvation;—that we should labour therefore that our faith may be increased and strengthened;—that even the weakest have encouragement to seek, and to hope for salvation in this way:—and finally, that we should take great heed that we do not bring a reproach upon this doctrine, by an irregular and licentious behaviour.

1. If *we are saved by grace through faith*, then it is certain that "we have no reason to glory."

If it were possible a person should perform the most complete and perfect obedience, and so were justified by works, it is but only in a limited sense he would have any thing of which to glory before God; since even he must acknowledge, that it is *God who works in him, both to will,*

and to do, and by his gracious influences renders him capable of both: however he, in such a case, may in some measure glory, that he has done his best, and that his behaviour has all that merit, or all that excellence, which the behaviour of a creature in his circumstances could possibly have. But when the *ungodly are justified*, (Rom. iv. 5.) when we who have been transgressors in ten thousand aggravated instances, are *saved by grace through faith*, of what shall we glory? Shall any of us glory that we are saved by another, when even our receiving that other is what God hath brought us to, by the renewing and sanctifying influences of his grace upon our hearts? When we had corrupted and undone ourselves, and were under a sentence of condemnation and wrath, we have embraced the Gospel, that is, we have accepted the riches of the Divine liberality and goodness exhibited in it: but shall a beggar glory in having stretched out his hand to receive an alms? Especially if it were given him by a generous and skilful physician, who before he bestowed that alms, had cured him of a disease, by which that very hand now stretched out to him, had been benumbed and disabled? Let us rather enter into that just and amiable reasoning of the Apostle Paul, and say as he does, *of him*, i. e. of God, *are we in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption*: let *no flesh* therefore *glory in his presence*; but *he that glories, let him glory in the Lord.* And this leads me to infer,

2. "That we have a great deal of reason to be thankful, and to adore the grace by which we are saved."

If it is *God who commandeth the light to shine out of darkness* that *has shined in our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*, let us bless the Lord who has shewed us this light, and with a cheerful gratitude let us *bind the sacrifice*, as it were, *with cords unto the horns of the altar.* Let us *bless the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ: according as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.* I would call upon you this day to do it; to

join with me, and with each other, in it. *Praiſe the Lord all ye his ſaints; be thankful unto him, and bleſs his name* (1)! Praiſe him, who graciouſly *purpoſed your ſalvation*, and *predeſtinated you to the adoption of children by Jeſus Chriſt unto himſelf* (2)! Praiſe him, who rendered this purpoſe effectual, and wrought it out *by a high hand and outſtretched arm!* Praiſe him, who *gave his own Son* to be a *ſacrifice* for you, and to *bring in everlaſting righteouſneſs* (3)! Praiſe him, who ſent his Spirit, as the great agent in his Son's kingdom, to bring the hearts of ſinners to a ſubjection to the Goſpel, and gently to captivate them to the *obedience of faith!* Praiſe him, who has revealed this glorious Goſpel to you at ſo great a diſtance of time and place! Praiſe him, who has impreſſed your hearts with a diſpoſition to regard it! Praiſe him, who has ſubdued your prejudices againſt it! Praiſe him, who, having implanted faith in your ſouls, continues even to this day to animate and ſupport it!—Let all ranks and ages join in this cheerful ſong! Praiſe ye the Lord, you that are rich in temporal poſſeſſions, if you have been enabled to renounce the world as your portion, and to triumph over it by this Divine principle! Praiſe him, you that are *poor in this world*, if you are *rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which God has promiſed to them that love him* (4)! Praiſe him, you that are cheerful and vigorous, and capable of rendering him that active ſervice which may ſpeak the gratitude of your hearts towards him! Praiſe him, you that are weak and languiſhing, ſince *his ſtrength is made perfect in* your *weakneſs* (5), and your infirmities illuſtrate the force of that faith which he has wrought in you! Praiſe him, ye youths, who with this guide and companion of your way, are ſetting forth in the journey of life with courage, and lifting up your feet in his paths! Praiſe him, ye aged ſaints, who ſtand on the borders of eternity, and live in a daily expectation that you ſhall *receive the end of your faith, even the ſalvation of your ſouls* (6). —Begin that work now, in which you are all ſo ſoon to join! Break forth into one joyful anthem, and ſing, "*Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us* (7), *but to thy name be*

(1) Pſal. c. 4. (2) Eph. i. 5. (3) Dan. ix. 24.
(4) Jam. ii. 5. (5) 2 Cor. xii. 9. (6) 1 Pet. i. 9.
(7) Pſal. cxv. 1.

all the *praiſe* of that *ſalvation*, which thou haſt already begun in our ſouls, and which thy faithfulneſs has engaged to complete." Again,

3. If *we are ſaved by grace through faith*, then certainly, "they who neglect ſuch a method of ſalvation, are highly inexcuſable."

To be not only delivered from everlaſting condemnation and ruin, but raiſed to the preſence and enjoyment of God above, is ſo glorious an exchange, ſo important a prize, that it would be worth while to ſecure it at any imaginable rate, whatever was to be reſigned, whatever to be endured, for it. But it is certain, that the more gracious the propoſal and offer is, the baſer and more criminal will the refuſal be. Had ſome hard matter been propoſed, *ſhould we not have done it?* and *how much rather*, when the Divine oracle only ſays, *Waſh and be clean* (1)? *Believe in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and thou ſhalt be ſaved* (2).—*To you*, my brethren, even to all that hear me this day, *is the word of this ſalvation ſent*, and brought (3). Let me addreſs you, therefore, in the language of the Apoſtle, and ſay, *Take heed that you receive not the grace of God in vain:* and let me add, *Behold, now is the accepted time: behold, now is the day of ſalvation* (4). Dare not to trifle in a buſineſs of ſuch conſequence; leſt if you ſhould neglect it even till to-morrow, there ſhould be no room to repeat that declaration then. That God ſhould ever offer ſalvation at all, and eſpecially in ſuch a method, is aſtoniſhing condeſcenſion and love; and every inſtance in which that offer is renewed, is a renewed miracle of mercy. But the day of the Divine patience has its limits; and if you trifle beyond thoſe limits, and *know not that the goodneſs and long-ſuffering of God leads to repentance*, this injured mercy will plead againſt you, and it will appear you have *treaſured up to yourſelves wrath againſt the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God* (5).

4. *If we are ſaved through faith*, then ſurely we ſhould "labour, that this bleſſed principle may be ſtrengthened in our ſouls."

(1) 2 Kings v. 13. (2) Acts xvi. 31. (3) Acts xiii. 26.
(4) 2 Cor. vi. 1, 2. (5) Rom ii. 4, 5.

The greater evidence we have of the ſincerity of our faith, the greater aſſurance may we juſtly have of our intereſt in the Goſpel ſalvation; and the ſtronger our faith is, the clearer will the evidence of its truth be. Let us therefore emulate the character of our father Abraham, and make it our care, like him, to be *ſtrong in faith*, thereby *giving glory to God*.—To this purpoſe let me addreſs you, my Chriſtian brethren, to be diligent and ſerious in attending the ordinances of Divine inſtitution, and eſpecially that of hearing the word; for as the Apoſtle obſerves, *faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*. And it is certain, the better we are acquainted with the word of God, the more ſhall we trace of its evidence; and it is probable we ſhall alſo feel ſo much the more of its energy, awaking and confirming thoſe internal acts of faith, which it is our duty with increaſing vigour daily to renew: and I doubt not but the experience of many that hear me atteſts the reaſonableneſs of this addreſs.—Let me alſo exhort you to ſeek after greater ſtrength of faith by fervent application to God in prayer; as the diſciples that *came unto Jeſus, and ſaid, Lord, increaſe our faith*. Plead that your *faith*, in its original, and in its progreſs, is *the work of God*; and earneſtly entreat that *his work* may *be perfected*.—And to add efficacy to all, labour to the utmoſt to bring forth the genuine fruits of true faith, in all the branches of holy temper and exemplary life. Thus *ſhew* to all that are about you *your faith by your works*; *walking worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called, worthy of him that has called you to his kingdom and glory*. For in proportion to the degree with which theſe fruits appear, it will be evident there is life at the root: and you will find, that as the vigour of our limbs, ſo alſo that of our virtues and graces, will grow by uſe and exerciſe. And in this view let me obſerve,

5. That if *we are ſaved by grace through faith*, then "there is encouragement even for the weakeſt ſoul, to ſeek after this Goſpel ſalvation, and to hope it ſhall obtain it."

Give me leave here to addreſs myſelf to thoſe whoſe hearts are impreſſed with their eternal concerns, but then feel their own manifold weakneſs, and perhaps may be diſcouraged (as young perſons very frequently are) with

obſerving the difficulty of religion. My brethren, if your hopes of juſtification were *by the works of the law*, whether the ceremonial or the moral law, theſe diſcouragements were juſt: ſince were all the ſins of your former life forgiven upon your return to God, yet through the infirmities of human nature, and the temptations of life, ye would no doubt quickly fall into ſome new tranſgreſſion; and this one, even the leaſt, would be ſufficient to ruin you, and to bring you into condemnation again. But *the righteouſneſs of faith* ſpeaks an eaſier and more gracious language, where it ſays, *Believe in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and thou ſhalt be ſaved.* You know of whom it was ſaid, *A bruiſed reed will he not break, and ſmoaking flax will he not quench*: why ſhould you not then enter into a treaty with ſo mild, ſo gracious, ſo compaſſionate a Saviour! Nay, I will add, Why ſhould you not be ſaved by him! Are you willing to accept his grace? Methinks I hear one and another reply, "What do I deſire ſo much as to accept it? Feeble and guilty as I am, I would at leaſt bow as low as any of thy ſervants, in a thankful acknowledgment of the riches and freedom of thy grace; and I would aſcribe my ſalvation to it in as entire a renunciation of all ſelf-dependence, as any of them all ſhould do." And when I aſk (as it is neceſſary I ſhould aſk) Are you alſo willing to bow to his yoke? I perſuade myſelf there are thoſe of you whoſe conſcience anſwers, "Lord, I would take it upon me, with a moſt thankful conſent: I deſire nothing ſo much as to ſerve thee; but I ſuſpect this treacherous and inconſtant heart, that is ſo ready to forſake thee." My brethren, this deſire of ſerving him, if you know what you ſay when you expreſs it, is the effect of his grace; and it is a comfortable token that *he will give more grace.* Set yourſelves, therefore, with a cheerful courage, to oppoſe thoſe difficulties that lie in the way, and to *work out your own ſalvation* with hope and joy, as well as *with fear and trembling: for it is God that* even now *is working in you, both to will, and to do, of his good pleaſure*; and you have abundant reaſon to *hope* he *will not forſake the work of his own hands.*

6. If the *doctrine of ſalvation by grace through faith* be ſo divine and important as we have heard, then "let us

take great heed that we do not bring a reproach upon it by an irregular and licentious behaviour."

Let the holy Apoſtle, who is the great aſſerter of this doctrine, be heard as the guardian of its honour, when he ſays, *Shall we continue in ſin, that grace may abound? God forbid!* You plainly ſee, that this doctrine, when ſcripturally explained as above, gives no rational foundation, no, nor even any plauſible excuſe, for ſuch an inference, however the corruption of men's hearts may take occaſion from it. And it would be far more reaſonable, and much leſs detrimental to mankind, to endeavour to root up all the vines in the world, and deſtroy all the animals intended for food, becauſe wine and fleſh are ſometimes the occaſions and inſtruments of luxurious riot; than to deny this important doctrine, becauſe it may be perverted to purpoſes unfriendly to practical religion. But ſee you to it, my friends, that you, if you are perſuaded this is the doctrine of God, behave in ſuch a manner, as to ſhew that you perceive it to be, what indeed it is, *a doctrine according to godlineſs. Wo to that man, by whom*, in this inſtance, *the offence comes! It had been better for him, that a millſtone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the ſea*, than that he ſhould occaſion ſuch diſhonour to God, and bring ſuch a reproach upon his truths and his ways. And give me leave to ſay, there is hardly any conſideration in the world that ſhould cut deeper into the heart of the truly good man, of one who has *taſted that the Lord is gracious*, and has *believed through grace*, than the reflections of having made ſuch unworthy and ungrateful returns to God, for that ſingular mercy which he has obtained from him, in the proviſion which the Goſpel has made for his ſalvation, in ſo gracious, and ſo endearing a way.

Let me therefore conclude with *charging you*, in the moſt ſolemn manner, *before God and the Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, and by the honour of that Goſpel you ſo ſtrenuouſly profeſs, that you exerciſe a holy watchfulneſs over yourſelves in this reſpect. Conſider, my brethren, how many eyes are upon you for evil. It is true indeed, that charity, that boaſted name, that divine principle, would teach men another leſſon: it would teach them to

mourn rather than to triumph over the faults of them that call themſelves Chriſtians. But there is very little of that to be found; and on the contrary, a great deal of that carnal, ſenſual, and diabolical zeal, which *rejoices in iniquity*, and takes the greateſt pleaſure in the irregularities of thoſe, whoſe failings ought moſt to be lamented; that is, of thoſe who are moſt ſignalized by a Chriſtian profeſſion. Remember, therefore, and conſider, my friends, that it would be far better for you to die, than to lay a ſtumbling block in the way of the ſouls of men; and to give them any juſt cauſe for repreſenting the Goſpel as a *doctrine of licentiouſneſs*, or ſpeaking of *Chriſt* as *the miniſter of ſin*.

You ſolemnly renounce all dependence upon your own righteouſneſs before God; and in profeſſing to do it, and to expect ſalvation by his grace alone, you do well. But give me leave to ſay, that if, in the mean time, *you yourſelves are found ſinners*, allowing yourſelves habitually in any thing contrary to the Divine will, the renunciation of ſuch a righteouſneſs as is conſiſtent with that, will be a very unworthy kind of ſacrifice before God, and do very little credit to your profeſſion before men. And by theſe declarations, when compared with ſo bad a conduct, you will run a great riſk of bringing your religious notions themſelves into diſgrace, and will probably build again that which you ſeem moſt ſolicitous to deſtroy. Let it therefore evidently appear, that *the grace of God, which appears unto all men, has* effectually *taught you to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world.* Let the whole world about you ſee that the Divine goodneſs to you, in which you rejoice and glory, has had its efficacy to purify and humanize your hearts, to fill them with humility and univerſal love, and to inſpire them with a moſt friendly, benevolent, generous care for the happineſs of all around you, as well as with a generous concern to make *your own calling and election ſure.* Nothing will ſo powerfully plead for the goſpel, as ſuch a care to adorn it, and to ſeek that SALVATION which is entirely OF GRACE, *through ſanctification of the Spirit*, as well as the *belief of the truth.*

THE END.